

LIPPINCOTT'S
MONTHLY MAGAZINE

MAY, 1913



ANYBODY BUT ANNE

BY

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CHAPTER I.

BUTTONWOOD TERRACE

I HAD known Anne Mansfield before her marriage to David Van Wyck, but I had never seen her since she became the wife of that well-known capitalist. Wherefore, when I received an invitation to one of her house-parties, I accepted it with a pleased sense of curiosity-about-to-be-gratified.

For though I had not been a suitor of Anne's, I had admired her as a girl, and I was greatly surprised when I heard she had married a man well on in years and possessed of much wealth.

As my train swayed swiftly through New England, toward the little village of Crescent Falls, where the Van Wycks had their summer residence, I tried to picture to myself the pretty little Anne Mansfield that I had known, as the chatelaine of a great estate, with an elderly husband and two grown-up step-children. The picture was so incongruous that I gave it up, and awaited first impressions with unbiased opinions.

And I may well have done so, for, though I knew of his wealth, I knew nothing of the taste and judgment that had led David Van Wyck to select for his summer home a most beautiful country estate, whose century-old mansion was surrounded by equally old buttonwood trees, a species rapidly growing extinct in New England.

Although I knew the Van Wycks called their house Buttonwood

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Terrace, when I saw it I felt a whimsical impulse to call it All Gaul—for it was so definitely divided into three parts. The enormous rectangle that had originally formed the main dwelling had later received the addition of two also rectangular wings. But these were not attached in the usual fashion; they were jauntily caught by their corners to the two rear corners of the main house. These lapping walls impinged but a few feet, or just enough for communicating doors. Thus, the wings, with the back or southern side of the house, formed three sides of a delightful terrace, from which marble steps and grassy paths led to formal gardens beyond, where one could wander among fountains, statues, and rare and beautiful plants.

The west wing held the many kitchens and other servants' quarters, but the east wing was one grand, spacious apartment without partition.

I think I have never seen a more impressive room than this study at Buttonwood Terrace. Its domed ceiling of leaded glass was perhaps thirty feet high, but so large was the room and so graceful its lines that the architecture gave the effect of perfect proportion.

The walls were panelled between the stained-glass windows, and at one end of the room was a small balcony, like a musicians' gallery, reached by a spiral staircase. At the same end of the room, under the balcony and opening on the terrace, were large double doors; and there was no other entrance save the single door that connected with the main house through the lapped corners.

I was interested in this especial room, and was very much pleased when, soon after my arrival, the house-party congregated there for tea.

The scene was a picturesque one. The contrast of the modern-garbed society people, their light laughter and gay chatter, with the dignity and grandeur of the old room and its antique furnishings, made an interesting picture. Everywhere the eye rested on carvings and tapestries worthy of a baronial hall, and yet the gay occupation of afternoon tea seemed not amiss in this setting. It was late in May, and though the great doors stood open to the terrace, the blaze of an open fire was not ungrateful.

My hostess did not herself preside at the tea-table, but left that to her step-daughter Barbara, while she graciously invited me to sit beside her and talk over old times.

"Remembering our schoolmate days, may I call you Anne?" I asked, taking my place by her on the davenport.

"I suppose I really ought n't to allow it, but it is pleasant to feel you are an old friend," she smiled.

"It is—though a bit hard to realize that the little school-girl I used to know is now mistress of all this grandeur."

"It is a fine old place, is n't it?" she returned, evading the personal equation. "And, perhaps because of its picturesque possibilities, I

pride myself on my house-parties. I adore having guests, and I invite them with an eye to their fitting into this environment."

"Thank you for the implied compliment," I murmured, but I brought back my gaze from my surroundings, to look more attentively at Anne's face.

It seemed to me I had caught a plaintive note in her voice, and I looked for a corresponding expression in her eyes. But she dropped her long lashes, after a swift glance that was a little roguish, a little wistful, and entirely fascinating. Suddenly I wondered if she were happy. My first impression of her husband had been that he was tyrannical and possibly cruel; I felt intuitively that Anne's light-heartedness was assumed, and covered a disappointed life.

But meantime she was chatting on, gaily. "Yes," she declared; "I select my house-parties with the utmost care. I have an exactly proper admixture of married people and unmarried, of serious-minded and frivolous, of geniuses and feather-heads."

"In which class am I?" I asked, more for the sake of making her look at me than for a desire for information.

"It's so long since we last met, that I shall have to study you a bit before I can classify you. But please be as frivolous as you can, for I want you to offset a very serious guest."

"I know; the long girl in pale green."

"Yes—is n't she Burne-Jonesey? That's Beth Fordyce, and she's the dearest thing in the world, but she has a sort of æsthetic pose, and goes in a little for the occult and such ridiculous things. But you'll like her, for she's a dear when she forgets her fad. The frizzy blonde lady next her is Mrs. Stelton. She's a young widow who's terribly in love with Morland, my stepson. To tell the truth, I invited her because I want him to find out that he really does n't care for her, after all. Then Barbara, at the tea-table, you know; she's exactly like her father, and when I married him Barbara was determined not to like me. But I am determined she shall; and of course I shall win out—though I have n't made any startling success as yet."

"So much for the women," I said. "Now tell me of your men."

"Well, you know my husband. He's distinguished-looking, is n't he? And though he's nearly sixty, that little alert air of his makes him seem younger. Morland looks like him, but they are not at all alike otherwise. Morland is handsome, but he is puffy-minded, and any woman can lead him by a string. For the moment, he thinks Mrs. Stelton is his ideal, but I intend that Beth Fordyce shall dethrone her. That tall man talking to Beth now is Connie Archer. He's a dear thing, but a little difficult. Mr. Van Wyck does n't like him; but, then, my husband likes so few people."

"Do you like Connie Archer?" I asked, looking directly at her.

She flashed me a glance of surprise, and then answered coolly, "I like him, but not as much as he likes me."

"Anne Mansfield Van Wyck," I said, looking at her sternly, "don't tell me you've developed into a coquette!"

"Nonsense!" she returned laughingly. "I'm not allowed to be anything of that sort. I'm a perfect Griselda of a wife, and my husband rules me with a rod of iron."

"Indeed I do," said Van Wyck himself, as he came toward us, and, really, Anne's speech had been made at him rather than to me.

"That's right, young man, give me your place," he said, as I rose; "and do you go and make yourself charming to the other ladies."

"Presently," I returned; "but first let me congratulate you on the find of this delightful old place. This room itself is a marvel. It might have been brought over from some English castle."

David Van Wyck looked around appreciatively. "It is a fine room," he agreed. "It was built later than the main house, and was originally intended, I imagine, for a ballroom. It has a specially fine floor, and that musicians' gallery at the end seems to indicate festivities on a big scale. To be sure, the whole scheme of decoration is too massive and over-ornate for these days, but it is all in harmony, and the gorgeousness of coloring has been toned down by time."

This was true. The lofty walls were topped by a wide and heavy cornice, with an enormous cartouche in each corner, massive enough for a cathedral. But the coloring was dimmed by the years, and the gilding was tarnished to a soft bronze. Most of the furniture consisted of choice old pieces collected by Van Wyck for this especial use, and it was plain to be seen that he took great pride in these, and in his rare and valuable pictures and curios.

"It is my room," he was saying, as he smiled benignly on his wife, "but I let Anne have her fal-lal teas here, because she thinks it's picturesque. But except at the tea-hour, this is my exclusive domain."

"You call it your study?" I inquired casually.

"I call it my study, yes; although I'm not a studious man, by any means. It is really my office, I suppose; but such a name would never fit this eighteenth-century atmosphere. I have my desk here, and my secretaries and lawyers come when I call them, and I have even profaned the place with a telephone, so that I'm always in touch with what the poets call the busy mart. Moreover, I confess I'm subject to short-lived fads and fancies, and this good-sized room gives me space to indulge my interest of the moment."

"He is, indeed," said Anne, laughing. "Last summer he was a naturalist, and this room was full of stuffed birds and dried beetles and all sorts of awful things. But that's all over now, and this year—what are you this year, David?"

To my surprise, Van Wyck's face hardened. A steely look came into his eyes, and his square jaw set itself more firmly, as he replied, in a dry, curt tone, "I'm a philanthropist."

The words seemed simple enough, and yet Anne's face also became suddenly serious, and, unless I was mistaken, a flash of anger shot from her dark eyes to her husband's grim face. But just then Archer and Miss Fordyce joined us, and Anne's smiles returned instantly.

"What mood, Beth?" she cried gaily. "You see, Honey, I've been telling Mr. Sturgis that you're æsthetic and lanky-minded and all the rest of it, and you must live up to your reputation."

"If I can," murmured Miss Fordyce, rolling a pair of soulful blue eyes at me; "but I'm only a beginner—a disciple of the wonderful mysticism of the——"

"There, there, Beth, cut it short," broke in Archer. "We know! The mysticism of the theosophical value of the occult as applied to the hyper-æstheticism of the soul by whichever Great High Muck-a-Muck you've been reading last."

The others laughed, but Miss Fordyce gave the speaker a reproachful glance, which, however, utterly failed to wither him.

"You'd be a real nice girl, Beth," he went on, "if you'd chuck mysticism and go in for athletics."

"You don't understand, Mr. Archer," began Miss Fordyce, in her soft, melodious voice; but Archer interrupted her: "There, there, now, don't come the misunderstood racket on me! I won't stand for it. Practise your wiles on Mr. Sturgis. Take him over there, and show him Mr. Van Wyck's Buddha, and tell him what you know about Buddhaing as a fine art."

I walked away with the pale-haired Miss Fordyce, but instead of talking about Buddha, we naturally fell into conversation about our fellow-guests.

"I can well understand," I said slowly, "that the occult would scarcely appeal to such a practical specimen of manhood as Archer. Who is he and what is he?"

"To begin with, he's a supreme egotist."

"Oh, I don't mean his character; but what does he do?"

"I don't know, exactly. I believe he's a mining engineer or something. But he's terribly in love with Anne, and he's clever enough not to let Mr. Van Wyck know it."

"But Anne knows it?"

"Of course, yes; and she doesn't care two cents for him. But she's a born coquette, and she leads him on, for nothing but an idle amusement. I don't think a woman ought to do that."

"Doubtless you are right, Miss Fordyce; but is it your experience that women always do what they ought to do?"

"Very rarely," returned Miss Fordyce, laughing, and I began to realize that when the girl dropped her silly pose she was really charming.

I had n't yet had opportunity to converse with Barbara Van Wyck, and under pretense of a quest of fresh tea, I led Miss Fordyce toward the tea-table.

But just then a motor-car arrived, and a group of callers came in through the great portals of the study. The general confusion of introductions and greetings followed, and when it was over I somehow found myself standing beside Mrs. Stelton, the pretty young widow from whose toils Anne hoped to rescue Morland Van Wyck.

She was attractive in her way, but commonplace compared to Beth Fordyce or Anne. She chatted pleasantly, but her conversation was of the sort that makes a man's mind wander.

"Who is that striking-looking man standing by the window?" I asked. "We were introduced as he came in, but I did n't catch his name."

"Stone," she replied, "Fleming Stone. They say he is a detective."

"Stone!" I exclaimed. "Is it really? Detective! I should think he was! Why, he's probably the greatest real detective who ever lived! What is he doing here?"

"His home is in Crescent Falls," Mrs. Stelton informed me; "that is, his mother has recently come here to live in the village, and he, naturally, visits her. He is staying with her now."

"Is he a friend of Van Wyck's?"

"No, he has never been here before. He came with Mr. and Mrs. Davidson, Crescent Falls Village people, and I think he came principally to see the house. This room, you know, is famous."

"Not as famous as he is," I said, gazing at the man I so much admired, but had never before seen.

Fleming Stone was a man who would have compelled notice anywhere, and yet his appearance was entirely quiet and unostentatious. He was slightly above average height, of a strong, well-set up figure and a forceful expression of face. His hair was slightly gray at the temples, and his dark, deep-set eyes gave a strangely blended effect of unerring vision and kindly judgment. His manner was marked by a gentle courtesy, and his personal magnetism was apparent in every tone and gesture.

I longed to get away from the uninteresting widow and talk or at least listen to Mr. Stone. As this was not possible, I suggested that we both stroll across the room and join the group that surrounded him.

Though apparently not over-anxious, Mrs. Stelton agreed to this, and we became a part of the small circle that had formed around the great detective.

Great detective I knew him to be, for his fame was world-wide, and yet as he stood there drinking his tea with a careless grace, he gave only the impression of a cultured society man, ready to lend himself to the polite idle chatter of the moment.

He was looking at Anne Van Wyck, and, though not staring, not even gazing intently, I could see that his interest centred in her.

But this was not at all astonishing. I think few men were ever in Anne Van Wyck's presence without centring their interest upon her.

Her slender figure was exquisitely proportioned, and her small head, with its masses of soft dark hair, was set upon her shoulders with a marvellous grace. Her deep gray eyes, with long, curling, dark lashes, were full of fascination, and her small, pale face was capable of expressing such receptiveness and such responsiveness that one's eyes were drawn to it irresistibly. Anne's face was mysterious—purposely so, maybe, for she was intensely clever; but mysterious with the weird fascination of the Sphinx.

And as Fleming Stone's own deep eyes met those of Anne Van Wyck, in a glance that caught and held, it seemed as if two similar natures experienced a mutual recognition.

I may have been over-fanciful, but I looked upon Fleming Stone as almost superhuman; and though, before my arrival at Buttonwood Terrace, I had felt no special personal interest in Mrs. David Van Wyck, I was now conscious of a dawning realization that the Anne Mansfield I used to know had grown to a wonderful woman.

CHAPTER II.

THE TALE THE FAN TOLD

BUT though Fleming Stone's interest seemed to me to be concentrated on his beautiful hostess, he was courteously listening to Miss Fordyce's eager questions.

"Please tell us all about yourself, Mr. Stone," she was saying. "I never saw a real detective before, and they're awfully different from what I imagined! I thought they were more—more——"

"Unwashed," put in Connie Archer bluntly. "I am not myself acquainted with many of them, but those I have met are not in Mr. Stone's class socially, by any means."

"They're not in his class professionally, either," I declared, anxious to have Fleming Stone aware of my appreciation of his genius. "Mr. Stone is in a class by himself. His work is art, that's what it is."

"Thank you," said Fleming Stone, but in the smile he gave me there was a slight tinge of that boredom that masters always feel at compliments from tyros. "My art, as you call it, is my life," he went on, simply. "I do not study it, I simply practise it as it comes along."

And, after all, any success I may have had is merely the rational outcome of logical observation."

"Oh, don't depreciate yourself, Mr. Stone," said Mrs. Stelton, shaking a silly finger at him. "You know you are the greatest detective ever—Mr. Sturgis told me so. And now you must, you simply *must*, tell us just how you do it, and give us an example. Here, take my fan, and deduce my whole mental calibre from it!"

Although Fleming Stone looked at the speaker pleasantly, I was convinced that he felt, as I did, that it would be perfectly easy to deduce the lady's mental calibre without the assistance of her lace fan.

"Yes, do! What fun!" exclaimed Morland Van Wyck, who was standing at the elbow of the fair widow who had enslaved him.

But before Fleming Stone could reply, Anne spoke.

"That would n't be a fair test," she said, flashing a smile at Stone; and then her eyes curiously deepened with earnestness as she went on: "But I do wish, Mr. Stone, that you would do something like that for us. I have heard that you can tell all about any one, just from seeing some article that they have used."

"That is not a difficult thing to do, Mrs. Van Wyck," said Stone. "You yourself could probably gather a great deal of information from any personal belonging of a stranger."

"Oh, yes," returned Anne gaily; "if I saw a thimble, I might deduce a sewing-woman; or a pipe, a man who smoked. But I don't mean that—I mean the sort of thing you do. Please give us an example."

I fairly cringed at the thought of Fleming Stone being stood up to do parlor tricks, like a society circus; and so incensed was I that the line, "Butchered to make a Roman holiday," vaguely passed through my mind. But as I saw Anne's vivid, glowing face and her entreating eyes, I felt sure that no man on earth could deny her anything.

Stone appeared to take it casually. "Certainly, Mrs. Van Wyck," he said, "if it will please you. I have never done such a thing, except in the interests of my work, but if you will give me a personal belonging of some one unknown to me, I will repeat to you whatever it may tell me concerning its owner."

Though Beth Fordyce had said nothing during this conversation, I think she had never once moved her eyes from Stone's face. Her large and light blue eyes looked at him with an absorbed gaze, and she now spoke, tranquilly, but with a positive air.

"I will provide the article," she said. "I have with me just the very thing. Excuse me, and I will get it."

She glided away—for no other verb of motion expresses her peculiar walk—and disappeared through the door that led into the main part of the house.

"How lovely!" cried Mrs. Stelton, clasping her hands in delight. "And then, Mr. Stone, will you tell us how you catch robbers by their foot-prints?"

"Alas, madam," said Stone, "robbers are rarely considerate enough to leave their foot-prints for my benefit. I know they have the reputation of doing so, but they are sadly remiss in the matter, and show a surprising negligence of their duty to me."

"A sort of criminal negligence," murmured Archer, and Stone grinned appreciatively.

Miss Fordyce returned, and as she crossed the room, her pale green gown trailing, she came towards Stone with a rapt expression.

"I can help you," she said, "because I can evolve a mental picture of my friend, and project it to your mind by will-power."

"Pray don't trouble to do that, Miss Fordyce," said Stone, unable to keep a quizzical smile entirely suppressed. "You force me to confess that I have no knowledge of the occult, and depend entirely upon my own very practical common-sense and logic. What have you brought me?"

"A fan," answered Miss Fordyce, handing him one. "When I came up in the train this afternoon, a friend was with me during part of the journey. She lent me this fan, and I carelessly forgot to return it. As I know my friend very well, and you do not know her at all, it is a fair test."

"Fine!" said Anne Van Wyck, her intense eyes darkening with interest. "Beth, that is just the thing. Now, Mr. Stone, tell us of the fan's owner."

In her interest, Anne had moved nearer to Stone, and was breathlessly awaiting his words. The magnetic fascination of the woman is indescribable. I am positive that nothing on earth would have induced Fleming Stone to such an exhibition of his special powers of deduction, except Anne's compelling desire that he should.

I saw, too, though it was almost imperceptible, the effort Stone was obliged to make to detach his attention from her and concentrate it on the fan he was holding.

"To approach this matter in my usual way," he said quietly, "I shall have to ask permission to examine this fan under a magnifying glass. Have you one at hand?"

"Here is one," said Morland, bringing a fine one from his father's desk, at which action I fancied I saw a shade of annoyance pass over David Van Wyck's face.

For a few moments, Fleming Stone examined the fan through the glass.

In idle curiosity I looked at the faces of those grouped about. Mr. Van Wyck was clearly annoyed at the whole performance; though

Morland, under the influence of Mrs. Stelton, waited in delighted anticipation. Condron Archer looked supercilious and even murmured to me that he doubted the detective's powers in such a test. Miss Fordyce wore the exalted air usual to people who affect the mystic. But Anne, the centre of the group, was surely enough to inspire Stone's latent powers to the utmost. She waited with a suppressed eagerness that seemed to show implicit faith in the result, and she even touched the fan as she too scanned it for any enlightening details.

Fleming Stone returned the glass to Morland and the fan to Miss Fordyce. But it was Anne whom he addressed.

"The fan," he said, in a quiet, narrative way, "belongs to a lady with dark hair and eyes and rosy cheeks, and a very perfect set of small, white teeth. She is healthy and rather robust, of a vigorous but not an athletic type. She is strong of muscle, but of rather a nervous temperament. She is thrifty and economical by nature, but proud and fastidious. Usually of decorous habits, but likes occasionally a gayer experience. She is refined in her personal tastes and artistic in dressing, though fond of bright colors. She is kind and generous-hearted, unmarried, and past her first youth. She lives in or near the West Eighties in New York City, and her telephone number has recently been changed to 9863 Schuyler. She is fond of embroidering with colored silks, she possesses a gown decorated with black spangled trimming, and she wears a very heavy ring on the little finger of her right hand."

Stone finished as quietly as he had begun, but his listeners were more excited.

"I don't believe a word of it!" Mrs. Stelton was saying, and of course Morland agreed with her.

But Beth Fordyce was speaking, almost as if in a trance. "It is every word true," she said, with a far-away look in her eyes. "If you had known Leila, you could not have described her more perfectly! Don't try to make me believe you are not occult! You are positively clairvoyant!"

"Nonsense, Beth," said Anne impatiently. "Don't talk such rubbish."

"No," said I; "occultism is n't in it with this kind of work. Mr. Stone, that is the real thing. Are you going to tell us your processes of reasoning?"

"Of course he is!" cried Anne. "That will be the delightful part of it. David, did you ever hear anything like it?"

But though Anne turned her lovely flushed face toward her husband, she received no answering smile.

"It does n't interest me," he said coldly, and it is a tribute to Anne's tact and cleverness that she quickly covered this awkward speech

by turning back to Stone, and saying with utmost charm of manner, "Tell me all about it at once. I can't wait another minute."

"My dear Mrs. Van Wyck," said Stone, seeming to address her only, "I am very glad to explain, if it interests you. You see, it's very simple, for this fan has been used a good deal and naturally bears the impress of the lady who has used it. To begin with, it is a souvenir fan that was given to the lady when she dined in the restaurant of one of the large hotels in New York. It is of the inexpensive paper sort that is used for that purpose. But the name of the restaurant has been carefully scratched out, showing that the lady desired to keep and use it, but did not care to have her friends know where she obtained it. This shows that the lady is not amply provided with fans, and shows too that she does not often frequent the gay restaurants. The fan is bright scarlet and gold, and, since she liked it well enough to keep it, I assume that it suited her brunette coloring, and also that she is fond of bright hues. She is nervous, because the fan shows that she has often picked at it—both its edge and its tassel—and has even frequently bitten it with her small, sharp teeth. You see, these lacquered sticks show clearly all marks and scratches, and this bar of metal that holds the tassel is much bent, showing a vigorous and healthy type. The fact that the fan has been used a great deal shows a robust and rosy-cheeked young woman, though not athletic, for athletic girls never use a fan. She is refined and fastidious in her tastes, for I notice a faint perfume of orris and violet. She is generous, for she gave away a fan that she found useful. And I think neither a very young girl nor a married lady would so long preserve a fan of this sort."

"But how did you know where she lives?" demanded Miss Fordyce.

"That argues a lack of observation on your part," said Stone, smiling. "On this light corner of the fan is written, though faintly, 'New No. 9863 Schuyler.' The people living in the vicinity of West Eighty-Third Street have recently had a change in their telephone-numbers; and when she noted a new number on her fan, I assumed it to be her own."

"It is," said Miss Fordyce. "But how did you know about her spangled dress and that curious ring she wears?"

"The ring left a decided impression on the outer sticks of the fan near the end, in such a position that it could come only from the abrasion of a heavy ring worn on the little finger. Then, you see, this tassel, as is usual on this sort of a fan, is of fine silk floss. It is much fluffed and tangled, and has a tendency to catch anything it may. In it I find a portion of a small black spangle, and also two or three threads of fine embroidery floss, pink and green. Surely it is easy to infer that the lady uses embroidery silks frequently, and that the spangle is from one of her gowns."

"Don't take it so casually!" cried Anne, with an imperious nod at him. "You shall not so belittle your wonderful powers. Supposing it is only logic and careful observation, no one else could do it! That fan could not have spoken to one of us, because our logic cannot understand its language. Mr. Stone, I thank you for doing that for me. I know you did n't want to."

"It is n't my custom to deduce for social entertainments," said Stone, smiling at her; "but it is my custom to accede to the wishes of my hostess."

"Thank you for that, then;" and Anne smiled back at him. "Now, as a small return favor, may I show you over the house? Mrs. Davidson tells me you want to see it."

"Yes, I'm interested. I understand it is very old and was built by an eccentric."

"Yes, it was; though we bought it from its second owner. Mr. Sturgis, will you go with us?"

I was glad to accept the invitation, and as we started we were joined by Miss Fordyce and Archer, and also by Mrs. Stelton and Morland Van Wyck.

So it was quite a party which followed Anne through the doorway in the corner.

We found ourselves in a corridor that ran along the south side of the house. We passed a branch corridor bearing to the right, but Anne laughingly remarked that those were the apartments of herself and her husband, and we might not enter. So we went on into a beautiful music-room, through stately reception-rooms and drawing-rooms, and into a delightful library. There were billiard and smoking rooms near by, and then through the dining-room and sunny breakfast-room we passed out to the terrace and down into the gardens. I thought Stone seemed a bit disappointed that, though the house was old, it gave no hint of secret passages or dark staircases. No dungeons or anything that savored of mystery or crime. I chanced to be walking by his side, and I rallied him on this.

"It is so," he confessed. "From what I had heard of the house, I had fancied it more complicated in structure. It is very four-square."

"Yes, it is," said I, as we looked at it from across the wide expanse of lawn and garden.

"Curious construction, though," mused Stone, "and yet perfectly simple: one large rectangle, with smaller rectangles attached at its two back corners."

"Usually wings are built entirely across the ends," I observed.

"Oh, of course it was done to get the advantage of light. Wings at the ends would have darkened many of the rooms; but attached so, at the corners, there are windows all round each part of the house."

This was true, and, as I now recollected, every room was flooded with daylight.

"I must join my hostess now," said Stone, "and make my adieux. I am leaving to-night for Kansas City, where I'm about to investigate a most important case."

I longed to ask him about it, but I did n't feel privileged to do so. I did, however, express my pleasure in knowing him, and hoped that we might meet again. He very courteously gave me his card, bearing an address that he said would always reach him; an attention that I prized highly, though it might never fulfil its purpose.

We all returned to the study, and after the departure of the Davidsons and their distinguished friend, the talk naturally turned to Fleming Stone and his work.

"It's uncanny, that's what it is," declared Mr. Van Wyck, "and it gives me the fidgets to have the man around."

"I feel that way, too," said Connie Archer. "Why, I'm perfectly sure that he could see straight through my coat into my pocket and read a letter there that I would n't have anybody know about—not *anybody!*"

"Is it one I wrote you?" asked Anne, so roguishly that it was most apparent fooling, but her husband looked up and scowled.

"Yes," returned Archer, with a most obvious intent of teasing his host; "that last delightful missive of yours!"

At this, David Van Wyck frowned angrily, and Anne said, "Nonsense, Connie, such jokes are n't funny. What is the letter about, really?"

"It's a tailor's dun," said Archer, taking his cue; "but I would n't have Stone know it for anything. I expect he pays his bills before they're due."

"Of course he does," said Morland: "deduces the exact amount they're going to be, and sends off a check without seeing 'em."

"Well, don't ask him here again, Anne," said her husband. "I don't like him."

"He won't come again very soon," I volunteered. "He's off to-night for Kansas City."

"Good thing, too," growled Mr. Van Wyck. "And now you people may seek some other pasture. I expect some callers to-night, and I want to get this place into some semblance of a gentleman's study, instead of a picnic ground."

"Oh, David," said his wife, "are they coming to-night?"

"Yes, they are. My mind is made up, Anne, and I'd rather you would n't refer to the subject."

"It's an outrage!" said Morland, under his breath. He spoke to Anne, but his father heard it, and said, "None of that, boy! I suppose

I have a right to do as I choose with my own! And if you know when you're well off, you'll accept the situation gracefully. It'll be better for you in the long run."

Morland turned away, looking obstinate and sullen. I had no idea what it was all about, but when I looked at Anne her face was so tragic in its utter despair that I was startled. Surely I had been right in thinking her light-hearted manner was a cloak for some desperate, heart-breaking trouble. But in obedience to Mr. Van Wyck's command, we all left the study. It was not quite time to dress for dinner, so we strolled out through the great doors onto the terrace; and even as we left, the footmen were already clearing away the tea-things.

CHAPTER III.

"YOU'LL BE SORRY IF YOU DO!"

FROM a certain terrace-landing which Anne called her "Sunset View," we watched the last glowing clouds dull and darken in the west.

A sort of depression had fallen on the party, because—as was perfectly evident—of Anne's mood. She was distraught and preoccupied; though now and then her dark eyes flashed with what was unmistakably anger.

"What's it all about, Anne dear?" said Archer, who let himself go a little when Mr. Van Wyck was n't present.

Instead of evading or parrying his question, Anne spoke out frankly.

"It's just this," she said: "David is going to give away all his fortune. He's going to build and endow a magnificent library for Crescent Falls Village—a library out of all proportion to a tiny little place like this."

"All his fortune!" I exclaimed, astounded. "You can't mean that, Anne!"

"But I do mean just that! He calls it philanthropy—that's his fad this year. If he were really philanthropic, it would be different; but he has become deeply absorbed in this ridiculous hobby for no reason at all except that he's always dashing into some new and crazy scheme. And he's so determined; he'll give away all his money, and then afterward he'll be sorry, but he can't get it back. He has had fads and foibles before, but though sometimes they were trying, they never involved such an amount of money as this."

"But, Anne," I went on, "you can't mean that he's going to give away all his money! How will he provide for you and his two children?"

"He says I've got to strike out for myself," growled Morland, who had been listening moodily, as with his hands in his pockets he leaned against the terrace-rail.

"Well, he's going to give half a million to the library," said Anne despondently; "and that's just about all he possesses. He says it's right to practise philanthropy and give away one's fortune while one's alive."

"Other good and great men have pursued that same plan," said Beth Fordyce, with one of her exalted looks.

"Yes," spoke up Barbara Van Wyck angrily; "but the other good and great men had many millions to start with. Father's going to give away all he has, except just enough for us to live on in a very small way. It is n't fair to us, and he has no right to do it, but he is simply immovable in the matter."

"I feel as Anne does," said Archer seriously. "If it were real, true philanthropy, it would be a noble deed; but I know Mr. Van Wyck, and he is always rushing suddenly and madly into some new project, which he as quickly abandons and regrets."

"Ah, Connie," said Anne, "if there were only a hope of his abandoning this! But when he regrets it, it will be too late."

"Yes, the committee-men are coming to-night, for the final acceptance of the deed of gift, or whatever you call it," said Barbara, in a tone of blended rage and despair.

I had thought Barbara Van Wyck was colorless, but in the intensity of her feelings her eyes flashed and the red rose to her pale cheeks until she looked like a veritable avenging angel. I had n't known she possessed so much energy, and I turned to her, saying hopefully, "Can't you persuade your father, at least, to delay it?"

"No; I've tried every argument I know of, and so have Morland and Anne. If Anne can't persuade him, nobody can."

Though this praise was grudgingly given, it was unmistakably earnest; and it was clear to be seen that, though Anne and her step-children were not congenial, and not even friendly, they had common cause in this impending catastrophe.

And I could not blame them. Such ill-advised and misplaced generosity was absurd, and seemed to me to argue Mr. Van Wyck's mind somewhat unbalanced. But as a comparative stranger, I did n't like to offer suggestions, or even comment very emphatically.

Mrs. Stelton, however, felt no such restraint. "It's outrageous!" she cried. "It's contemptible! I never heard of such a performance! If I were you, Morland, I should have my father adjudged insane."

"He is insane on that subject," muttered Morland; "but what can I do about it? If you knew my father as I do, you'd know that, insane or not, he will have his own way."

"Yes, he will," said Anne, sighing, and looking so adorably pathetic that it did n't seem possible any one could disappoint her as Van Wyck proposed to do.

"Won't he listen to you, Anne?" I asked. "Does n't he care for your comfort and happiness?"

"No," said Anne, and though she looked the picture of utter hopelessness, she showed also a cool reserve that warned me not to intrude too far upon her personal affairs.

"Of course he cares for Anne," broke in Archer; "but I tell you, he's out of his head! He does n't know what he's doing."

"He is n't out of his head, Connie," returned Anne gently, "and he does know what he's doing. I'm going to try once more, before the committee comes, to make him change his mind, but I have n't much hope. Come, people, we must go and dress for dinner."

Con Archer threw discretion to the winds and gazed frankly at Anne, as he said, "How can he refuse you anything? No man could, I know!"

Anne, though her color rose a little, did n't even glance at Archer, but, turning to me, walked by my side toward the house, chatting lightly on trivial subjects.

Later, as we gathered around the dinner-table, one could scarcely believe there was such an undercurrent of trouble among the Van Wycks. Our host was unusually bland and affable, Barbara was placid, and Morland was the debonair man of the world that society requires.

As to Anne, she was a marvel. In a dinner gown of pale yellow satin, which suited especially well her exquisite coloring, her wonderful hair coiled low, and her great eyes shining, she seemed animated by some unusual energy. She was roguish and dictatorial by turns. She was dignified one moment and softly pathetic the next. I could n't make her out. Either she had persuaded her husband to abandon his plan, or the matter was still undecided. At any rate, she could not have tried and failed, and still have shown this vivacity.

But I did not yet know my Anne. I sat next her, and dinner was not half over before she confided to me the news of her total failure.

"Not only did David refuse to listen to me," she said, "but he forbade me to speak to him again on the subject; and he spoke to me in such a way and in such language that I can never forgive him."

"Anne!" I exclaimed, for, though smiling, her smile was assumed for the others' benefit; and her low tones, heard only by me, were full of bitterness and desperate grief.

"Anne," I murmured involuntarily, "let me help you. What can I do?"

"Nothing," she replied. "No one can help me."

Perhaps it was the pathos of the situation, perhaps it was her marvellous beauty, enhanced by the dramatic moment, or perhaps it was inevitable, but I fell in love with Anne Van Wyck then and there.

Or, rather, it was an awakening to the fact that I had always loved her, even when we were school-time friends. Naturally, I had sufficient self-control not to disclose this secret even by a glance, but repeated in carefully modulated tones my desire and willingness to help her, if possible; and then, with an effort, I turned to talk to my neighbor on the other side. It proved to be Beth Fordyce, and her pale blue eyes lighted as she began to talk eagerly to me.

"Let us make a pact, Mr. Sturgis," she said. "I, too, want to help Anne, and surely together we can do something."

It was quite evident that she had overheard my words, and this annoyed me; and I answered that, with all the willingness in the world, I failed to see how Mrs. Van Wyck's guests could do anything in this matter. She took the hint, and changed the subject, but almost immediately after Mrs. Stelton's shrill voice was heard addressing the table at large.

"Well, I think you're perfectly horrid, Mr. Van Wyck!" she exclaimed, shaking a beringed hand at him. "To give away all that lovely money that ought to belong to Anne and Barbie and Mr. Morland!" The last name was accompanied by a coquettish glance in Morland's direction, but she went on, addressing her host: "Why, if a husband of mine did that, I'd—I'd shut him up on bread and water for a week!"

"Perhaps he would enjoy the rest, Mrs. Stelton," said Van Wyck, gazing at her blandly. The man had a way of saying these things, which, though rude, was rather enjoyable to disinterested hearers.

Good-natured Mrs. Stelton laughed. "Oh, what waggery!" she cried. "But if it brought him to his senses, I should n't mind. I've a notion to shut you up for a week, Mr. Van Wyck, and let you think this matter over!"

"Though I always enjoy your witty chat, my dear Mrs. Stelton, I must beg of you to drop this subject;" and this time Mr. Van Wyck's air of finality brought us a respite from Mrs. Stelton's silly observations. But Morland gave one parting shaft.

"If you do this thing, Dad," he growled, "you'll be mighty sorry!"

A silence fell. It was not so much what Morland said, but the quiet intensity of his tone, which seemed to convey a definite threat. Indeed, his father must have felt it, for he looked up quickly at his son; but he only said sarcastically, "I thank you for your warning," and then the subject really was dropped.

Anne resumed her gayety, though I now knew for a certainty it was all a pretense. Con Archer nobly helped her out, and chatted lightly and gracefully. Barbara continued to sulk in silence, but all the rest rose to the occasion, and only appropriate dinner-table talk was heard.

Coffee was served in the drawing-room for the ladies, while the men remained at table.

Perhaps from a sense of duty, Archer made one more effort.

"I say, Van Wyck," he began, "I know it's none of my business, but mayn't I suggest, as man to man, that you think this matter over a bit longer before making your decision? You know, to a disinterested observer, the gift you propose to make seems out of all proportion to its object; and I can't help thinking that on second thoughts you would agree to this yourself."

"Mr. Archer," said Van Wyck coldly, "the only one of your remarks to which I agree is your first one: that it is none of your business."

Condron Archer flushed, but as David Van Wyck's guests were not unused to his scathing speeches, this one was not openly resented; and Archer said nothing further.

And then, seemingly unable to control himself, Morland blurted out, "I say, Dad, you just *can't* do it!"

"Can't?" and the elder Van Wyck raised his eyebrows at his son.

"No, *can't*!" Morland went on, blindly angry now. "It's heathenish! It's a crime against your wife and daughter, to say nothing of me. I tell you, you *can't*!"

David Van Wyck's clear, cutting tones fell like icicles: "If you will be present, Morland, at the meeting this evening, I shall take pleasure in showing you that I can."

"You bet I'll be there!" and Morland looked almost like a belligerent boy as he met the cold stare of his father's eyes.

"I'm glad you accept my invitation; and now shall we join the ladies?" Rising from the table, we crossed the hall to the drawing-room; and perhaps four angrier men never wore the smiling mask of politeness.

Anne, seated in a carved, high-backed chair, made an exquisite picture, and she turned her beautiful, appealing eyes to her husband as he entered. David Van Wyck crossed the room straight to her. Placing his hands on the two carved griffins' heads that formed the arms of the chair, he leaned over the beautiful face upturned to his, and whispered a few words in Anne's ear. Then he lightly kissed her on the cheek, and, without a word to any one else, strolled out of the room toward the study.

What he said to her nobody knew, but Anne turned deathly white, and grasped the carved chair-arms as if in extremest agony.

I was uncertain whether to notice this and go to her assistance, or whether to keep up the farce of gay conversation in an endeavor to cover her agitation.

Morland gave his step-mother one glance, clenched his teeth, and, muttering, "Brute!" strode off after his father.

Without hesitation, Archer drew a chair to Anne's side, and, sitting down, took her hand in his.

But he erred, for Anne drew away her hand with a freezing dignity, and, rising, came over and sat by Mrs. Stelton.

And then I was surprised by another of Anne's absolutely inexplicable changes of mood. "What a heavenly brooch!" she said, smiling at Mrs. Stelton. "Florentine work, is n't it? I perfectly adore those things! I have one something like it, but a more conventional design. Don't you just *love* to buy things in Florence, or in Naples, or indeed any part of Italy? Italy is *lovely*, is n't it?"

Mrs. Stelton stared at this flow of inane talk, and I suddenly wondered if Anne were hysterical. I saw Archer move as if to approach her and then turn on his heel again, doubtless fearing rebuff. So I dared to venture, myself. "Mrs. Van Wyck," I said, "won't you come with me for a little walk on the terrace? I'm sure the cool air will be refreshing."

"Thank you," said Anne simply, and she went with me at once, draping the long train of her gown over her arm as we passed through the hall.

"You are very good," she said, a little wearily, as we stepped out onto the terrace. "How did you know I wanted to get away?"

I stifled an impulse to tell her that love helped me to read her thoughts, and said quietly, "I know you're troubled about that plan of your husband's, but let us hope for the best."

"There is no longer room for hope," she said dully. "Come, let us look in at the window."

Of course I followed her along the terrace to the windows of the great study. We could easily look in, and the deep colors of the stained glass prevented our being seen by those inside. And, any way, there was surely no harm in it. We saw Mr. Van Wyck and Morland, and three other men, who doubtless represented the committee.

"Yes," murmured Anne musingly; "there they are. Mr. Millar, Mr. Brandt, and Mr. Garson. I do not blame them. Of course, if David offers them this money, they'd be foolish not to take it. Mr. Brandt is the only one who has really over-urged in the matter. In fact, he suggested it to David first. Oh, Raymond, is n't it too bad!"

It was the first time she had called me by my first name, and I felt a thrill that blotted out all thought of Van Wyck or his money.

"And you mustn't think," she went on, "that I'm selfish or ungenerous. If David were honestly a philanthropist, or if I were n't so sure that he'd regret this later, as he does all his erratic impulses, I'd feel different about it. But you see how it is, don't you, Raymond?"

"Yes, Anne, I see how it is." And though I spoke quietly, my heart was in a tumult.

"Oh, look!" she cried. "Morland is getting angry! He is quarrelling with his father!"

"Don't be alarmed," I said. "Morland can never get the better of that man. His father will not mind anything he says."

But it was evident that Morland had said something that his father did mind, for the elder man's temper was roused, and the two were certainly in deadly earnest. We could hear no word that was spoken, but the three visitors looked appalled, and were evidently trying to pacify the combatants.

"Come away, Anne," I said, sick at heart over the whole matter. "You can do nothing—why torture yourself by looking on? Let me tell you what I brought you for a gift."

"What?" she asked, but without interest.

I led her back across the terrace, as I told her of a beautiful piece of Venetian glass that I had brought for her. It was a gem, rare and valuable, but I would not have lauded it as I did except in an endeavor to distract her mind from the sight she had just seen.

"Where is it?" she asked, at last, faintly interested.

"I gave it to a footman when I came," I replied.

"Then he will have given it to my maid, and it will be in my room," she said; then, hesitatingly, "Don't think it strange, will you, if—if I don't tell David that you gave it to me? He is—he is peculiar, you know."

"Jealous, you mean," I said, laughing. "That does n't surprise me, and, truly, I'm glad of the fact that I can make him jealous!"

But I'm not sure that Anne heard this, so preoccupied was she with her own thoughts. We returned to the drawing-room, but it was not long before we all went to our rooms.

Anne bade me good-night on the stair-landing. "David and Morland are still shut up with that committee," she said; "and I am going at once in search of the gift you brought me. I know I shall love it——"

"For the sake of the giver," I interrupted, with a gay foolery that sounded as if I did n't mean it; but I did.

"Not at all," said Anne saucily. "I shall love it only for its beauty and intrinsic worth. And if it's Venetian glass, it must have both. I hope to goodness it is n't smashed!"

"I think not; I had it packed carefully. Good-night, Anne."

"Good-night," she said, her long lashes sweeping her cheeks; and then added, as an afterthought, "Raymond."

And as she disappeared, I wondered whether she had spoken my name from pure coquetry, or—what?

CHAPTER IV.

THE CRIME IN THE STUDY

WHEN I entered the breakfast-room the next morning, Archer and Morland Van Wyck were already at the table. The ladies, Morland informed me, breakfasted in their own rooms.

"And your father?" I asked, as I seated myself.

"Oh, Dad's usually the earliest bird about. His interview with that precious committee last night must have worn him out, and he's sleeping late."

"Then, the committee succeeded in their fell design?" asked Archer.

"Yes, they succeeded, but you mustn't say fell design. Dad was in no way coerced by those men. In fact, he——"

"Morland," said a low voice from the hall, and I looked up to see Anne standing in the doorway. She wore a rose-colored boudoir gown and a lacy cap. She was pale, and her small white hand grasped nervously at the portière.

"What is it, Anne?" said Morland, as we all rose.

"Your father—he—he has n't been in his room all night. He's locked in the study, and Carstairs can't get in."

Carstairs, Van Wyck's English valet, was behind Anne, and, though his expression was the conventional blank, his face was white and his eyes showed a vague fear.

"Whew!" exclaimed Morland. "Stayed in there all night! Must have fallen asleep after his committee meeting."

"But Carstairs has pounded on the door, and I've called and called," said Anne nervously. "Won't you come?"

Morland went at once, and Archer and I hesitatingly followed.

We paused as we passed through the drawing-room, but then, hearing Morland's loud calls, with apparently no response, we went on through the corridor that led to the study.

"Nothing doing," said Morland, as we approached; and though his tone was light, I saw that he was seriously alarmed.

"Can't we get in the other door?" I suggested; and Archer added, "Or a window?"

"Not through the windows, sir," said Carstairs. "They're all fastened inside."

"The outside door, then," said I, and Archer followed me as we went back through the corridor, out on the terrace, and tried to open the massive doors of the study. But we might as well have attempted to enter a locked cathedral. We tried to peer in at the windows, but the inner blinds were drawn, and we could see nothing. We returned to the house, where Anne and Morland were still endeavoring to get a response to their repeated calls.

"Looks queer," said Morland, shaking his head. "I'm afraid old Dad has had a stroke or something."

His tone seemed to me altogether too careless for the possibility he was suggesting, but my interest and attention were centred on Anne. She was trembling violently, her face was white and drawn, and her eyes had a haunted look, as of a terrible fear.

"We must get in," she whispered. "Something must have happened."

"Shall we break down the door?" I asked.

"Impossible," said Archer. "I doubt if six men could break in that door."

"That's right," said Morland. "These old doors are not the flimsy sort they make nowadays. We must pick the lock. Carstairs, go for Ranney, the garage mechanic. He can manage it. Tell him to bring tools."

"I wish you would go to your room, Anne," said Archer gently. "I'm sure it would be better."

"Yes, do," said Morland. "Where's your maid? . . . Here, Jeannette!"

And as the frightened maid appeared, Morland said, "Take care of Mrs. Van Wyck. Take her to her room and stay with her, and don't chatter to her."

The suite of rooms occupied by Anne and her husband were close at hand, and as maid and mistress disappeared, Ranney came.

"Get to work and open that door," ordered Morland. "Pick the lock or cut it out, whichever is necessary, but get us in."

Ranney picked the lock skilfully and rapidly, but still the door refused to open. "It's bolted," he said.

"Cut out the bolt," said Morland, on whom the suspense was beginning to tell.

Ranney obeyed, and, though marring and spoiling the beautiful door, he succeeded at last in throwing it back on its hinges, and we went in.

David Van Wyck sat in his desk chair, motionless, with a stain of blood on his shirt-front and waistcoat.

"Murdered!" exclaimed Morland, springing forward. "By some of that blamed committee! I'll be revenged for this!" As he spoke, he was feeling for his father's heart and pulse, though there was no possible doubt that the man was dead.

As we all stood in horror-stricken silence, my mind worked rapidly. "Hold on, Morland," I said. "It can't be murder, with this room locked up as it was. Your father did this himself."

Morland turned from his father and stared at me. "Suicide!" he exclaimed. "Absurd! Why should Dad want to kill himself?"

"As to that," put in Archer, "why should those men of the committee want to kill him? He was about to give them his money. And, as Sturgis says, no one could have murdered him and got away, leaving this room entirely locked on the inside. But something ought to be done. You ought to send for a—a doctor or something."

"What good could a doctor do now!" said Morland, looking a little dazed. "But I suppose it is the right thing to do. Carstairs, telephone for Doctor Mason and tell him to come at once. Don't tell him what for—there's no use of this getting all over until we know something more about it ourselves. Use this telephone here on the desk."

With difficulty, Carstairs controlled himself sufficiently to obey orders. Morland strode about the room. "It's so," he declared. "Every window is fastened with these enormous bolts, that are more than burglar-proof. And this outside door, as you see, is bolted like a barricade. There is no other possible entrance except the door at which we came in, and you all know how secure that was. Consequently, it must be that my father killed himself. But why should he?"

"And how did he do it?" said I, suddenly realizing that there was no weapon lying about.

"I don't know—don't ask me!" and with a groan Morland flung himself into a chair and buried his face in his hands. He seemed like a man who had utterly collapsed after passing through a terrible ordeal, and I said to Archer, "Let's leave him alone, and do what we can ourselves."

"What can we do?" said Archer. "We mustn't touch anything, you know, until the coroner comes."

"Coroner!" I exclaimed. "Good gracious, does he have to come?"

"Is n't he always called, in case of a mysterious death?"

"Well, this is certainly a mysterious death, if ever there was one," I declared; and I could n't help looking curiously about, though Archer had warned me against touching anything. "At any rate, I know what killed him."

"What?" and Archer looked amazed.

"He was shot," I said, trying to hide my pride in my own discovery.

"How do you know?"

"Look on the floor. There, near his chair, are five or six small shot. See them?"

Archer stared at the floor and saw the shot almost at Van Wyck's very feet.

"But how on earth——" he began, when Doctor Mason came into the room.

His professional calm a little upset by this tragedy, the doctor's hand trembled as he examined the body of David Van Wyck.

"Suicide?" he inquired, as he completed his task.

"Must have been," said Archer, "as he was locked in here alone. How was he killed? What is the wound?"

"I don't know," said Doctor Mason, looking puzzled. "He may have been shot by a very small calibre pistol, or he may have been stabbed by some sharp instrument. You see, this small hole in his shirt-bosom is perfectly round; but there are no powder-marks."

I called the doctor's attention to the shot on the floor, and he looked more puzzled still.

"But he was n't shot with a shotgun," he said. "In fact, I incline to the opinion that he was stabbed with some sharp, round instrument."

"A hat-pin," I suggested.

"No," said the doctor impatiently; "there is n't one hat-pin out of a hundred made that could go through a stiff shirt-bosom without bending. But something like that, only rather thicker. You see the size of the hole."

"But may n't it be a bullet-hole?" said Archer.

"It may be. At any rate, we must send for the coroner. Wake up, Morland." The doctor had crossed the room and laid his hand not unkindly on Morland Van Wyck's shoulder. He shook him slightly, and Morland raised his white, drawn face.

"Must we have the coroner?" he asked. "Can't we call it a stroke or something, and not have any publicity? It's going to be awful hard on—on Anne."

Something in his tone made me realize Morland's feeling for his father's beautiful young wife. Doubtless he had concealed and even tried to overcome it, but now in his hour of trial his first thoughts flew to her. This explained to my mind his sudden collapse after his earlier attitude of bravado.

And then Anne came into the room. She had seen Doctor Mason arrive, and had considered it her right to know what had happened to her husband. She wore a simple white morning-gown, and her maid Jeannette hovered behind her with a vinaigrette of smelling-salts.

"What has happened?" said Anne, advancing steadily into the room. And then, as she saw the still figure of David Van Wyck, she looked at each of us in turn. Seeming to make a choice, she went to Doctor Mason, and, putting her hands on his arm, said simply, "Tell me."

"Mrs. Van Wyck," said the old doctor straightforwardly, "your husband is dead. We do not know exactly the means of his death, and I am afraid it will be necessary to put the matter into the hands of the coroner."

Anne's slender figure swayed a little, but she did not faint, and Doctor Mason gently steadied her, as he went on talking: "There is nothing you can do, Mrs. Van Wyck, and as your physician, I advise

you to go to your room and lie down. I assume that Morland will take charge of his father's affairs; and I think that Miss Barbara should be told at once what has happened."

I could n't help admiring the poise and practical good sense of Doctor Mason, nor could I help noticing that every one present showed self-restraint and composure. Though shaken, Anne was not hysterical, and she went away with her maid, in obedience to the doctor's orders. She said as she left the room that she would send for Barbara and tell her herself.

Doctor Mason telephoned for the coroner, and before he arrived a young man came in, who was a stranger to me.

"Is that you, Lasseter?" said Morland, looking up. "A tragedy has occurred, and my father has been killed, by himself or another, we don't know." Morland spoke mechanically, almost as if he felt it incumbent upon him to explain the situation.

I soon discovered that Barclay Lasseter was Mr. Van Wyck's secretary. He did not live in the house, but came every morning to the study. He was the tallest man I had ever seen; of slight build, with a dark, somewhat sinister face. I could n't help wondering if he were in any way implicated in the tragedy. Like the rest of us, he was self-possessed, and, though shocked, seemed anxious, principally, to do anything he might to help.

"Could it have been the work of burglars?" he said. "Has anything been stolen?"

"I don't know," I replied, as no one else spoke. "Do you miss anything?"

Lasseter glanced over the desk, and, taking some keys from his pocket, opened one or two drawers.

"Check-book and petty cash all right," he said briefly. "Have n't you looked in the safe?"

"No," said Morland; but he made no move to follow up Lasseter's suggestion.

Then the coroner came, and at the same time Barbara entered the room. The girl went straight to her brother, and sat by his side while they conversed in low tones. The coroner, whose name was Mellen, was a brisk and somewhat aggressive man. He went at once to the body of the dead man and began his examination. He agreed with the doctor that it was difficult to tell what had caused his death, except by an autopsy, but he at once began a search for the weapon. Archer and I joined him, but in the whole great room we could find no pistol nor any instrument of the nature of a stiletto.

"Then, it must be the work of an intruder," declared the coroner, "who took the weapon away with him."

"But that's impossible," I said; "for, to my knowledge, this room

was absolutely secure in its locks and bolts against any intruder. Nobody could possibly have gotten in."

"But it is equally impossible that a man could have killed himself and left no trace of the weapon," said Mr. Mellen doggedly.

"Could he have stabbed or shot himself and then thrown the weapon far from him?" asked Archer, looking deeply thoughtful.

"Death was almost instantaneous," said Doctor Mason; "but I suppose that by a spasmodic muscular effort he could have done that. However, the relaxed position of his hands and arms does not make it seem probable."

"But it is the only explanation," said I eagerly. "Come on, Archer, let us make a thorough search. Perhaps Mr. Lasseter will help us."

We began to look about the room, but Coroner Mellen seemed only slightly interested in our doing so.

"I don't think it's suicide," he declared; "and, though I'm not prepared to say how the murderer got in or out of this room, I believe that he did do so, and that David Van Wyck did not die by his own hands. Has anything been stolen?"

Lasseter opened the safe door, and I expressed surprise that it was unlocked.

"Often is," returned the secretary carelessly. "Most of the valuable things are in inner compartments, with complicated locks of their own. And, too, there never are burglaries in this peaceful village, and a man grows careless. But I can't see that any securities are missing. All these papers seem undisturbed."

"The pearls!" cried Morland, starting up suddenly. "Are they there?"

"Here is the box," said Lasseter, handing a jewel-case to Morland. "Open it yourself."

Morland opened it and gave a cry of despair, for the satin-lined case was empty.

"The pearls gone!" said Barbara, with an awe-stricken look. "Then, it was a burglar, after all."

"But it could n't be," I began, when the coroner cut me short.

"If pearls have been stolen, of course it was a burglar," he said; "and a professional cracksman, if he could get into this room and out again."

"But he could n't!" I declared emphatically, glancing at the windows and doors.

Still the coroner refused to heed me, and said abruptly, "What were they worth?"

"They were practically priceless," Morland stated. "My father had been collecting and matching them for years. It was a triple necklace

composed of three strands of the finest and largest pearls he could possibly procure. One hundred thousand dollars would be a conservative estimate of their value."

"And a man kept such jewels as that in an unlocked safe?" said the coroner incredulously.

"They must have been there temporarily," said Morland, as if puzzling the matter out himself. "And, too, I've no doubt my father intended to lock the safe before he left the study. But he was murdered first."

"Have you any theory, Mr. Van Wyck, how a murder could have been effected?"

"No," said Morland; "I have n't. I know, even better than the rest of you, how absolutely this room is protected against forcible entrance. And that is one reason why my father was sometimes careless about locking the safe. He knew no one could get into this room from outside. Of course, upon leaving it at night, he always locked the door that communicates with the house, and kept the key himself."

"There is no duplicate key?" asked Mr. Mellen.

"None," said Morland positively. Then Barbara Van Wyck made a suggestion. "If Father did—did kill himself," she said hesitatingly, "possibly he himself had taken the pearls from the case and hidden them."

I realized at once what she meant. If for any reason David Van Wyck had taken his own life, it would have been quite in keeping with his cruel nature to hide the pearls where his family might not easily find them.

Suddenly Lasseter made an announcement. He had been looking over the papers that lay on the desk, and he said abruptly, "The deed of gift is gone."

"What do you mean?" asked Coroner Mellen, alert for further information.

"Last night," said Lasseter, "I was here during a conference of some gentlemen from the village and Mr. Van Wyck. He made out to them a deed of gift of a large sum of money. However, he retained this paper after his visitors had left. He may have put it away after I left, myself, but so far I cannot find it."

"At what time did you leave?" asked the coroner.

"Almost exactly at midnight," returned the secretary.

"And where was the deed you speak of then?"

"Lying on this desk, in front of Mr. Van Wyck."

"Who was here when you left, besides Mr. Van Wyck?"

"Only his son, Morland."

"That's a lie!" exclaimed Morland, springing up. "When I left this room at midnight, you were here alone with my father!"

CHAPTER V.

THE INQUEST

To my surprise, the coroner abruptly cut short this conversation, and somewhat officiously cleared the room. He ordered us all out, and soon after he directed that the body of Mr. Van Wyck be conveyed to a bedroom, and then he locked up the study. He appointed the inquest for that same afternoon at two o'clock, and went away to obtain his jurymen.

But just as he was leaving the house, Barbara Van Wyck detained him a moment.

"I think," said she, "that we ought to have a detective. It seems to me that it is all so mysterious and beyond our comprehension, that only a trained mind can get at the truth of the matter."

"Yes, indeed," exclaimed Mrs. Stelton, who was fluttering about. "Of course we ought to have a detective. Let us get the very best that money can procure!"

The coroner gave her a surprised glance, and I did not wonder, for the volatile little widow had assumed an air of responsibility and importance, quite as if she already belonged to the family. And Morland backed her up in her opinion.

"Yes, by all means let us get a detective," he said. "This is not going to be an easily solved mystery. For my part, I can't understand it at all. Do you know of a good detective, Mr. Mellen?"

There were no experienced detectives in Crescent Falls Village, but Coroner Mellen agreed to send for one to the nearest large town.

And so quick was the response that by noon we were taking into our confidence one Mr. Markham, who, I decided for myself, was clear-headed and logical in his methods, if not a genius.

Mr. Markham was somewhat self-assured and self-sufficient; he was perhaps even a trifle conceited; but he was quick and alert, and went about his work in a systematic and methodical manner.

The household was divided as to the necessity for his presence. Anne, from her own room, sent word that she wished neither to see nor to speak to him. Archer (and I knew it was because of Anne's attitude) also refused to confer with the detective. Lasseter, the secretary, abruptly took his hat and went home when Mr. Markham arrived, saying he would return for the inquest.

But the rest of us listened eagerly to the detective's opinions. Of course he was allowed access to the study, and of course he made a careful examination of the whole room. But nothing was found that would cast any light on the mystery, and, a little disappointed at Markham's non-committal attitude, we drifted away to other parts of the house.

The whole place was in a turmoil. Neighbors and village people were coming and going, everybody was making suggestions, and nobody in particular seemed to be in charge of affairs. Barbara and Morland quarrelled openly; Anne refused to see anybody; Archer stood around, moody and taciturn; the languid figure of Beth Fordyce could be seen strolling about the gardens, wringing her hands in picturesque despair; while Mrs. Stelton fluttered about everywhere, asking absurd questions and making herself a general nuisance.

I longed for a little talk with Anne, but decided not to bother her, so I employed myself answering the questions of the curious visitors who came and went.

The whole village was up in arms. And yet nobody seemed to care very much that David Van Wyck was dead. Their all-absorbing interest was the mystery of the thing. They positively gloated over the seemingly contradictory facts that a man had met his death in an inaccessible room and yet apparently not by his own hand.

Dozens of explanations were offered, some ingenious, some ridiculous; but I listened to them all, hoping that perhaps a chance shot might hit the truth. For I too was deeply interested in solving the mystery. Quite apart from my personal connection with the matter, I felt a stirring of the detective instinct to solve the problem. And not the least curious phase of it was that apparently nobody accused or even suspected any individual. The whole argument seemed to be that it must have been the work of an expert burglar, and yet that the entrance of such an intruder was impossible!

At two o'clock the inquest was held. The great drawing-room had been given over to this purpose, and the audience of interested villagers filled it to overflowing.

Coroner Mellen was short and sharp in his speech, and wasted little time in preliminaries. His jury was sworn, and his first witness on the stand, almost before I realized that the inquest had begun.

The valet, Carstairs, was the first one questioned. He answered the coroner in a nervous and agitated manner, and it was clear to be seen that he was exceedingly ill at ease. To me, however, this was only a natural result of finding himself implicated in such a tragedy.

"Tell the story in your own way," said Coroner Mellen, speaking a little more kindly, as he observed the man's demeanor.

"I went to the master's room this morning, sir, as I always do, and he was n't there, and his bed had n't been slept in. So as I could n't think of any place he might be, except in his study, I went there, sir, and it was locked, and I could n't get in. I knocked several times, but nobody answered; so I went and told Jeannette, and she told Mrs. Van Wyck."

"Who is Jeannette?" asked Mr. Mellen.

"She's Mrs. Van Wyck's maid, sir. And then the gentlemen came from the dining-room, and they ordered the door broken in, sir. We called Ranney for that."

"Never mind about that now; tell us of last evening. When did you see Mr. Van Wyck last?"

"When he was dressing for dinner, sir. And he told me then that I need n't attend him when he retired. He said he expected some visitors in the evening, and as he should be up late I need n't wait up for him."

"And did n't you?"

"N-no, sir."

"Why did you hesitate at that reply?"

"I—I did n't, sir."

"You did. What time did you go to bed yourself last night?"

"At—at about midnight, sir."

"And where were you all the evening?"

"I was down in the village. I went to a ball there."

"And returned home about midnight?"

"Why—yes, sir."

The valet did seem disingenuous, and I felt sure that the coroner doubted his truthfulness. But to my mind the man was merely confused by the questions shot at him.

"Did you see any of the members of the household on your return?"

"None but the servants, sir."

"You did n't see Mr. Van Wyck in his room or in his study?"

"No, sir; I did not."

This answer, at least, was given without hesitation, and, apparently satisfied, the coroner dismissed the witness.

Ranney, the garage mechanic, was next called. His testimony was straightforward, and he was entirely unembarrassed, and indeed seemed almost uninterested.

"Mr. Morland called me," he said, "and ordered me to pick the lock of the study door. Of course, with my knowledge of mechanics, I could do this; and as it was then bolted, he ordered me to saw out the piece of wood containing the bolt. This I did, and we opened the door."

Further questioning showed that Ranney, who lived in a cottage on the grounds, had retired early, and knew nothing of the tragedy until the door was forced open.

Next came the evidence of the doctor.

"I frankly admit," said Doctor Mason, "that I am puzzled as to the instrument which caused Mr. Van Wyck's death. I have made

an examination of the body, and I find no bullet or shot. I conclude, therefore, that he was stabbed with some sharp, pointed instrument which has left a small circular hole in the clothing and the flesh."

"Could it have been a hat-pin?" asked the coroner.

"No, it could not," declared the doctor, a little shortly. "I don't know why people are so ready to assume a hat-pin. As a matter of fact, a hat-pin is a most impracticable weapon. It would either bend double or break off if used for such a purpose. Nor was it a dagger—of any usual description. A dagger or a knife would leave a slit-like incision, and the mark in question is absolutely circular. I can only say that the weapon must have been sharp-pointed and round. Further than that, I do not know."

"Could the wound have been self-inflicted?" asked the coroner.

"So far as its position is concerned, yes; but it is improbable that a man could have sufficient force of nerve to stab himself in that manner, for it meant a sure, strong drive of the weapon. Also, it is improbable that after that thrust the victim could live long enough to draw out the weapon and hide or dispose of it. And I understand it has not been found."

"No," returned Mr. Mellen; "it has not yet been found, but it may be eventually discovered. It is your opinion, then, Doctor Mason, that David Van Wyck was not a suicide?"

"That is my opinion," returned Doctor Mason positively.

Next came Lasseter, the secretary. He told of the committee that visited Mr. Van Wyck the evening before. He explained that it was Mr. Van Wyck's intention to make a gift of half a million dollars for a village library, and that three prominent men of the village were a committee to accept this gift and superintend its disposal as directed.

This evidence caused a decided sensation in the audience. The library plan had been a secret until now, and the village people were astounded at the news. The coroner, however, did not pursue the subject, but turned his queries in other directions.

"When did you last see Mr. Van Wyck alive?" he inquired of the witness.

"I was present at his conference with the committee. Those gentlemen stayed until well after eleven. I then remained with Mr. Van Wyck until very nearly twelve, leaving for home, I should say, at about ten minutes before midnight."

"You left Mr. Van Wyck's study, and went directly to your home?"

"I did," returned Lasseter, and, though the answer was prompt, there was something about the man's voice that made me doubt his integrity. I had no reason to question the truth of his statement, but his wandering eye, a certain nervous working of his features, and his restless clasping and unclasping of his hands made me wonder whether

or not he had anything to conceal. But I also realized that the curt, almost aggressive manner of Coroner Mellen was enough to disturb the poise of the most innocent witness.

"You left Mr. Van Wyck alone in his study?"

"Not so. His son, Morland, was with him."

"I was not!" declared Morland, starting up from his seat not far from me.

Lasseter paid no attention to this interruption, and the coroner said, "Why does Mr. Morland Van Wyck contradict you, Mr. Lasseter?"

"I don't know," replied the secretary. "I repeat that when I left the study, I left Mr. Van Wyck and his son there, and I said good-night to both as I went out of the door."

"Did they respond to your good-night?"

"The elder Mr. Van Wyck said, 'Good-night, Lasseter,' in his offhand way, and immediately followed it with a remark to his son."

"What was the remark?"

"He said, 'You see, Morland, I have proved that I could carry out my intention, after all.'"

"And did Mr. Morland Van Wyck reply to this?"

"That I cannot say, as I was by that time outside the door and had closed it behind me."

"And you know nothing more of this matter?"

"The next time I saw Mr. Van Wyck was when I arrived here this morning and found him dead."

"You are positive that when you left last night Mr. Morland Van Wyck was in the study with his father?"

"I am positive."

There was a breathless silence. It was quite evident from the expressions on the faces of the audience that they had leaped to the conclusion that Morland Van Wyck had killed his father because of the plan for endowing a library. The villagers had become aware of the situation so suddenly, and had been so astonished at the munificence of the gift, that it seemed to them but natural that the Van Wyck family should resent this disposal of a fortune. But the thought of Morland committing a crime because of it appalled them, and looks of horror could be seen on every face. Morland Van Wyck was next called as a witness.

The sight of his livid, angry face seemed to render the coroner incapable of definite questions. "What have you to say for yourself?" he said.

"I have this to say," thundered Morland: "Barclay Lasseter lies when he says he left me with my father! The truth is, I left the study before Lasseter did. I left him there with my father, and if he states the contrary, he has his own reason for doing so!"

"You are implying——" began the coroner.

"I'm implying nothing!" Morland stormed on. "I am stating that I left my father and his secretary alone in the study. And I am stating nothing but that." He threw a defiant look at the secretary, who returned it in kind. Coroner Mellen was decidedly nonplussed. He seemed to fear an outbreak of personal hostilities between these two, and he said hastily, "Let us not pursue this further. One of you gentlemen must be mistaken. Mr. Van Wyck, have you any opinion or theory as to the cause of your father's death?"

I thought this rather clever of the coroner, for it would bring forth either an accusation of the secretary or a tacit implication of freedom from suspicion.

"My opinion is the only one possible to hold. My father was murdered by some evil-minded intruder. Presumably an expert burglar, because valuable jewels and valuable papers have been stolen."

"But how, in your opinion, could this intruder commit his crimes and get away, leaving the room securely locked and bolted on the inside, with no possible means of ingress or egress?"

"I'm not prepared to say *how* he did it; the fact remains that he *did* do it."

At this point a juryman made a remark. He was a shrewd-faced young fellow, and seemed imbued with a sense of his own importance.

"I wish to say," he began, "that we should like at least a suggestion as to how the murderer could have escaped from a room which we may call hermetically sealed."

Morland turned on him with an impatient gesture. "I hate that term 'hermetically sealed'! It is absurd, to begin with. That my father's murderer did get out of the room is proved by the fact that the instrument of death cannot be found. Therefore, since the murderer did get out, the room cannot be hermetically sealed, however much it may appear so."

"Can there be any secret or concealed entrance?" asked the alert juryman.

"No," replied Morland; "there is nothing of that sort in the house. And the study is really a separate building, only attached at one corner. Moreover, a burglar, however enterprising, could hardly know of a secret entrance of which we did not know ourselves! I tell you, Mr. Coroner, the murderer got away after the clever fashion of a cracksman who knows his business. How he did it, I cannot tell you; but he killed my father, stole the Van Wyck pearls, stole also the deed of gift which had been drawn up for the village library, and then escaped. Escaped, Mr. Coroner, and is therefore still at large! But he must be found, and no effort must be spared to find him!"

I looked at Morland in astonishment. He had assumed a rather

pompous attitude and seemed to be giving orders instead of giving evidence.

Coroner Mellen looked greatly disturbed. I felt sure that he was beginning to realize that the case was more than he could cope with. His limited intelligence could not grapple with the mysteries and contradictions that confronted him. But he must proceed, and so, with a baffled air, he dismissed Morland and called Barbara Van Wyck.

The girl took the stand with no apparent trepidation, and calmly awaited questioning.

"What can you tell us of this affair?" asked the coroner briefly.

"I can tell you no facts that you do not already know," returned Barbara, in even tones and with perfect poise of manner. "But I wish to advance a theory totally different from my brother's. To repeat the phrase already used, my father's study was 'hermetically sealed.' It was *impossible* for an intruder to get in and out again, leaving the room as we found it this morning. I myself examined the windows and doors, and I assure you that not only are the locks and bolts especially strong, but they are so complicated as to make it impossible to manipulate them from the outside. I hold, therefore, that my father was not murdered, but that he took his own life."

"And the robberies?" suggested the coroner.

"There were no robberies. The pearls have disappeared, but I am positive that my father hid them, and that they will yet be discovered. The deed of gift he doubtless destroyed himself, and then took his own life. My father was a very eccentric man, and it is my opinion that at the last his brain gave way, and for what he did he was not mentally or morally responsible."

There was something in the girl's words and manner that carried conviction. Her quiet, dignified composure was so different from Morland's belligerent insistence that the sympathy of all present seemed to go out to her. All over the room heads were nodding approval of her theory, and it seemed quite in keeping with the erratic career of David Van Wyck.

"But, Miss Van Wyck," said the coroner, and he seemed to speak with a certain diffidence, "if your theory is right, what became of the weapon used by your father?"

"I do not know, nor do I know what that weapon could have been. But I hold that that may yet be discovered, and I hold too that the absence of that weapon is not so inexplicable a mystery as is the question of how a burglar could escape from that room."

This was true so far as it went. We were confronted by two seeming impossibilities: if a suicide, the weapon could not have disappeared; if a murder, the murderer could not have made his exit from that sealed room. As theories, one might take one's choice!

"You think, then," Mr. Mellen was saying, "the missing pearls will yet be found?"

"I do not know," replied Barbara. "I think that my father hid them with the unnatural cunning of a diseased mind. For I am perfectly certain that my father was not sane when he took his own life. And if the same ingenuity which marked the manner of his death prompted his hiding of the pearls, it may well be possible that we shall never find them."

I looked at Miss Van Wyck in amazement. The girl I had thought so colorless and inane was proving possessed of an unsuspected strength of character. Her simple, logical statements carried great weight, and, though she left unsolved a principal point, many of her listeners showed a decided willingness to subscribe to her theories.

CHAPTER VI.

FURTHER EVIDENCE

MRS. VAN WYCK was next called to testify. If Barbara had appeared calm and composed, the same could not be said of Anne. She was white and trembling to the very lips; she tottered as she walked, and with an audible sigh she sank into the chair placed for her. But all this, at least to my mind, in no way impaired her strange, eerie beauty. Her large gray eyes looked almost black against the whiteness of her pallor, and as she swept a mournful, unseeing glance round the room, I endeavored to intercept her gaze and give her a nod of sympathy and help. But she did not look at me, and, clasping her hands in her lap, prepared to meet the ordeal of the coroner's questions.

Mr. Mellen looked at her for a moment before he spoke, and his hard face took on a slightly softer expression at the sight of her evident distress.

In what he doubtless meant to be a gentle voice, he said, "When did you last see your husband alive, Mrs. Van Wyck?"

To my surprise, Anne showed a decided agitation. She clasped her hands tightly to her breast, and in a choked, almost inaudible voice she replied, "When he left me after dinner, to go to his study."

"He was then in good health and spirits?" asked Mr. Mellen, and a more inane question I never heard. It seemed perfunctory, as if the man scarcely knew how to broach the subject.

For a moment Anne simply stared at her questioner, as if trying to control her voice. Then she said, "My husband was in perfect health, and—yes, I think I may say he was in good spirits."

"What were his last words to you as he left you?"

If this were a random shot, it was certainly a peculiar coincidence. For we all remembered how, as he left the room, David Van Wyck had whispered to his wife something that had caused her the deepest emotion.

Anne's great eyes looked at each of us in turn. After the briefest glance at the others, she gazed longer at Archer. It may have been my imagination, but I thought he gave to her an almost imperceptible negative shake of his head. She looked frightened, and then her glance met mine. I so feared that any appearance of secrecy on her part would be prejudicial to her, that I nodded my head affirmatively, meaning for her to answer the question.

"Must I tell that?" she asked in a pained voice.

"Yes," said Mr. Mellen; "especially if it has any bearing on Mr. Van Wyck's death."

But Anne did not hear the coroner's words. She was nerving herself for her reply, and she said in a low voice, but distinctly, "As he left me, my husband whispered to me that he should give the Van Wyck pearls as well as his gift of money to the library committee."

A wave of indignation swept over the audience. Anxious as the villagers were for the gift of the library, not one of them would have wished Anne Van Wyck's jewels sacrificed in its cause.

Elated by the sensational answer, the coroner continued. "Did he say anything more?" he inquired.

"Must I tell that?" Anne scarcely breathed, her face as white as the handkerchief she held.

And the coroner said inexorably, "Yes."

Had Anne looked toward me then, I should have shaken my head, for I feared from her expression that the revelation would be a startling one. She looked dazed, she spoke almost as one in a trance, but she said clearly, "He said, 'Now don't you wish I was dead?'"

Doubtless it was unconscious and involuntary, but Anne had reproduced almost exactly the jeering tones of David Van Wyck's sarcastic voice, and not one of us doubted that those were the very words and the very inflection that had sounded in her ear as he had whispered to her just before leaving the drawing-room. I well remembered the agonized expression on her face as he turned away from her, and I knew that at this moment she was vividly seeing a picture of the scene.

The audience fairly rustled with this new sensation. The coroner seemed spurred, and with great enthusiasm continued his catechising.

"Why did he say that?" he said bluntly. "Had you wished him dead?"

A murmur of indignation was heard from the audience, and both Archer and Morland started as if about to protest.

But Anne raised her clear eyes to the coroner's face, and said coldly, "No, I had never wished such a thing."

"Why, then, did he speak that way?"

"Mr. Van Wyck was quick-tempered and very sarcastic of speech," she replied. "I can only explain his remark by assuming that it was prompted by anger and sarcasm."

"Mr. Van Wyck was angry, then?"

"Yes, he was angry."

"At what?"

"He was angry because the members of his family were opposed to his plan of giving away practically all his fortune to a public institution."

"And then Mr. Van Wyck left you, and you never saw him again alive?"

"That—that is so."

Except for a slight hesitation, the statement was direct, but it was manifestly untrue. Anne's eyes fell, the color came and went in her cheeks, her foot tapped nervously on the floor, and she was rapidly tying her handkerchief into knots. A more agonized, indeed a more guilty, demeanor could not have been manifested.

At that moment my eyes met hers, and it flashed across me that she and I had looked in at the window of the study and had seen Mr. Van Wyck in colloquy with the committee. Perhaps it was telepathy that carried the same thought to her, for she said suddenly, and I know she spoke truly, "Oh, yes, I did see him again after that! I was walking on the terrace later, and I saw him through the study window, talking with his visitors."

"At what hour was this?" inquired the coroner, as if the exact time of the incident were the turning-point of the whole case.

"I don't know," returned Anne carelessly. "Perhaps about half-past nine or quarter of ten, I should say."

Mr. Mellen looked a little crestfallen, as if an important bit of evidence had gone wrong. To my mind, he certainly was a block-head, but, after all, he was merely there to ask questions, and, if the jurymen desired, they could supplement his inquiries. I glanced at the detective, Markham, to see how he took it. He was exceedingly attentive to what was going on, and sat with his head slightly forward and his eyes alert, apparently gleaning more information than was offered by the mere spoken words.

"And then," pursued the coroner, "after that glimpse through the window, you never saw your husband again alive?"

Anne answered this in the negative, but so low and uncertain was her voice that she was obliged to repeat it twice before the coroner was satisfied with her reply. I felt a vague alarm. If Anne were

speaking the truth, why should she act so strangely about it? And if, by any chance, she was not veracious, she must know that her manner was unconvincing. I had no interest in any one else who might be implicated in the tragedy, but my heart cried out, "Anybody but Anne!"

"At what time did you retire, Mrs. Van Wyck?" went on the questioner.

"I went to my room about half-past ten o'clock."

"And you retired then?"

"I did not. I read for a time, and wrote some letters, and went to bed about midnight. Or perhaps it was later—I dare say it was one o'clock."

"Are you not sure?"

"No, I didn't notice the time. Perhaps my maid can tell you. She was with me."

So casual was Anne's manner now that the coroner seemed to realize his questions were not of particular importance, and he tried a new tack.

"Was your husband kind to you, Mrs. Van Wyck?"

Anne stared at him coldly for a few seconds, and then spoke with great deliberation: "I decline to answer such a question, and I'm sure you are overstepping your rights in asking it."

Her manner even more than her words abashed the coroner, but to cover his chagrin he became insistent. "It is necessary that I should know if there was harmony between you," he declared. "I regret that the circumstances make it necessary for me to press the question."

Anne's eyes flashed. Her agitation was gone now, and her poise and calmness seemed to disconcert her inquisitor even more than her embarrassment had.

"There was perfect harmony between us," she said, holding her head proudly and looking straight at the coroner, "with the exception of this matter of the library. I tried to dissuade my husband from his intent, for his own sake quite as much as for my own, for I felt sure he would regret such quixotic generosity. But he was determined to proceed in his plan, in spite of my protests."

"And at the last moment he decided to add the valuable jewels to his gift?"

"Yes; his words to me last evening were the first intimation I had had that he meant to give away the Van Wyck pearls."

"Had you any reason to doubt your husband's sanity?"

"None, except in this matter of the library gift. Nor do I call that insanity; but rather a monomania which possessed him temporarily."

"Do you think your late husband hid the pearls, or do you think they have been stolen?"

"I can form no opinion, as my husband's death is so wrapped in mystery. He may have secreted the pearls or they may have been stolen by an expert burglar. Personally, I have no theories on the subject. It is all utterly mysterious to me."

Anne passed her hand wearily across her brow with a gesture of exhaustion. I think this roused the coroner's sympathy, and he excused her from further questioning.

She was succeeded by the three men of the committee, who had been with David Van Wyck the night before.

Their testimony was just what might have been expected. They had met with Mr. Van Wyck for the purpose of accepting his gift. The necessary papers had been drawn but not signed. For technical reasons, they had been left overnight in the possession of Mr. Van Wyck, who had said he would put them in his safe. They declared that no mention had been made of pearls or jewels. The gift had been only money. The men of the committee testified that they had left at about quarter past eleven, and that the Van Wycks, father and son, and the secretary, Mr. Lasseter, had bidden them hearty and pleasant good-nights. These gentlemen of the committee were extremely regretful that the deed of gift was missing, and, indeed, they seemed to allow that regret to occupy their minds almost to the entire exclusion of the more tragic happening. But, I reasoned, they were only slightly acquainted with David Van Wyck, and even that acquaintance was not of a friendly character. Perhaps, then, it was not to be wondered at that they felt more keenly the loss of the projected gift than the loss of its giver.

Next to give evidence were the guests of the house. Mrs. Stelton seemed almost to enjoy the importance of being questioned as a witness, and answered volubly and with an evident intention of making a good impression on the audience. She spoke to them rather than to the coroner, and showed a certain personal interest that was clearly meant to imply that she was or would some time be a permanent member of the Van Wyck household. And yet, though she cast frequent glances at Morland, they were not always responded to, nor did he seem absorbedly interested in what she was saying. Then, too, her testimony was of no importance whatever. She could tell nothing that was not already known, and her opinions were absolutely valueless.

She was soon dismissed, and Beth Fordyce took her place. But the girl also was an unimportant witness, and, save for one thing, said nothing worth listening to.

But, whether inadvertently or not, she repeated a remark which Morland had made to his father at dinner the night before. This

speech was to the effect that Mr. Van Wyck would be sorry if he carried out his plan. I could n't believe that Beth intended even to cast a shadow of suspicion in Morland's direction, but, to the eager crowd waiting for a straw to show which way the wind blew, this speech was indicative. And yet, quite unconscious, apparently, of having said anything by way of suggestion, Beth took her seat, placid and unruffled.

But to Morland, evidently the shaft had struck home. He remembered he had said that to his father, he realized that it might react against him. I thought of this, too, and then I remembered that Lasseter had sworn that he had left Morland alone with his father, and Morland had given him the lie!

But already Archer was testifying. The gist of his evidence was practically the same as the others, but he related it in a concise, straightforward way that held the attention of his hearers. He said that he had said good-night to the ladies at about half-past ten the night before, and that then, in company with me, he had gone to the smoking-room, where we stayed for perhaps half an hour, both going to our rooms at about eleven o'clock. He then told of our meeting again at the breakfast-table, and of Anne's coming to the dining-room to tell us of Mr. Van Wyck's non-appearance. Of course the rest of his story was practically a repetition of the others.

"Have you any theory regarding the crime?" asked Mr. Mellen, and the oft-repeated question took on a new interest as Archer said thoughtfully:

"It's hardly a theory, but I should like to suggest an idea that may or may not be plausible."

"What is it?" asked the coroner, with interest.

"I'm afraid it will sound absurd," said Archer slowly and seriously; "but it is the only explanation I can think of, which would be even a possible solution of the mystery. Though I'm not a detective, nor can I deduce facts from circumstantial evidence or clues, yet this possibility I speak of is merely an adaptation of a story I once read. In this story, a well-known work of fiction, a young woman was found murdered; and the weapon could not be discovered, although it had left a small, round hole."

Intense interest was manifest all over the room. Necks were craned to get a better view of the speaker. The listeners fairly hung on his words, and many felt that the mystery was about to be solved.

"In a word," went on Archer, "the weapon used was a sharp, slender icicle. As you may readily understand, it performed its fatal deed and then melted, leaving no trace. As you can see, this is not only possible, but both credible and plausible. At this season there are no icicles, but I offer, merely as a suggestion, that if Mr. Van Wyck's

death is a suicide, may it not be that the weapon was an icicle, shaped, let us say, by his own hand, from a piece of ice taken from the water pitcher."

"By Jove!" The whispered exclamation came from Lasseter, the secretary. He was staring at Archer, and muttering beneath his breath. "He's struck it!" he declared. "That's the only solution, and it must be the right one! Clever fellow!"

"He did n't deduce it," I whispered back to the secretary, for, to tell the truth, I was a little jealous that I had n't thought of it myself; for I, too, had read the book in question. "He merely remembered having read of such a thing."

"All the same, he's right," returned Lasseter; "and I wish I'd thought of it!"

The coroner was greatly impressed with this new idea. He turned to Doctor Mason and asked his opinion.

The old doctor looked thoughtful. "I would n't say it was impossible; but you must remember, gentlemen, the hole left by the weapon in this case is small and perfectly round. Would it not be difficult to make, artificially, a smooth, round icicle, strong enough to pierce clothing and flesh, and strike the heart with a fatal blow?"

"It would be difficult," said the coroner, "but I must admit it seems to me the only solution. By the process of elimination, we *must* conclude that this is the truth."

"Rubbish!" exclaimed the detective, Markham, who had scant patience with the coroner's pompous manner. "Consider the facts. Let us suppose a pitcher of ice water had been brought into the room. Was it?" he looked round inquiringly.

"Yes," said Morland; "Father rang for it, and the butler brought it in."

"At what time?"

"About ten o'clock, I should say."

"Well," triumphantly went on the detective, "then I hold that after twelve o'clock there would not be sufficient ice left in the pitcher from which to make this deadly icicle!"

Doctor Mason nodded his head, and, indeed, we all felt that the icicle theory was rather untenable.

"Well," said Archer, "it is merely a suggestion toward the explanation of the mystery. It may or may not be the correct solution. But what seems to me more important is to learn who was the last person to see Mr. Van Wyck alive. The absence of that deed of gift seems to me a very peculiar feature. A burglar would take pearls or money, but he would have no reason for taking that deed."

The coroner looked thoughtful. "If Mr. Van Wyck was murdered," he said, "there must have been a motive for the deed. It is true that

a burglar would desire only money or valuables. We must conceive, then, the deed being done, that the murderer—if it is a murder—must have been some one interested in keeping Mr. Van Wyck's fortune away from the library."

CHAPTER VII.

ONE OF OURSELVES!

THE coroner had only put into words what everybody present had been uneasily thinking. The missing deed seemed to prove that the murderer was one of the household. For who, except the members of the family, would care whether Mr. Van Wyck gave away his money or not.

Of course my glance flew straight to Anne, to see how she took this blow. She sat very still, and her face was white even to the lips. I could see it was only by a brave exercise of will-power that she kept herself from collapse. Morland looked angry and belligerent. He glared at Lasseter, and the secretary responded with a stare equally unfriendly. Barbara looked horror-stricken. She seemed about to speak, and then shut her lips tightly, as if determined to say nothing at this crisis. Again my heart cried, "Anybody but Anne!"

I was unable to keep still. "Nonsense!" I exclaimed. "You are theorizing without data. Your implication is unwarranted and false."

The coroner looked at me, not reprovingly, but as if deeply interested. Then he dismissed Archer from the stand, and called on me for my evidence.

"I can tell you nothing in the way of facts that you do not already know," I said, "but I wish to say that I entirely coincide with Miss Van Wyck's opinion that her father ended his own life. It is not incredible that his very erratic mind gave way at the last. Nor is it surprising that he should destroy the deed and hide the pearls under stress of sudden insanity."

"And what is your theory regarding the manner of his death?"

"I have no definite theory; but I wish to call attention to the fact that I found several shot on the floor at Mr. Van Wyck's feet."

My statement produced quite a sensation in the audience; for the suggestion of shot seemed to imply at least a possible method of the crime.

But the detective, Mr. Markham, interrupted me and said quietly: "It is not worth while, Mr. Coroner, to waste time in consideration of the shot. There is a small receptacle on Mr. Van Wyck's desk, filled with that same shot, used as a pen-cleaner. I observed that the shot found on the floor was the same, and I have no doubt it was spilled by accident."

The Coroner turned to Doctor Mason and inquired if Mr. Van Wyck's death could have been brought about by shot.

"No," replied the doctor positively. "I probed the wound and found no bullet or shot. David Van Wyck was stabbed, and the weapon was afterward withdrawn. I cannot subscribe to the icicle theory, though I do not say it would be impossible. But the deceased was most assuredly not shot."

I felt crestfallen and a little ashamed. For, having picked up the shot, I should have noticed the same among the furnishings of the desk. The coroner asked me only a few more questions, of relative unimportance, and was about to dismiss me when he added, as an afterthought, "When did you last see Mr. Van Wyck alive?"

It was the query I had been dreading. But there was nothing for it except to tell the truth. Involuntarily, I glanced at Anne, but her eyes were cast down, and she paid no heed to me.

"Of course I was with him at dinner," I said, "and after dinner he left us to go to the study. After that I saw him a moment when from the terrace I glanced in at the study window."

"You glanced in? For what purpose?"

"For no particular purpose. Mrs. Van Wyck and I were strolling by, and merely chanced to look in."

"What was Mr. Van Wyck doing?"

"Conferring with the committee from the village, I assumed. We could not hear his words, of course, nor did we try to."

"What was Mr. Van Wyck's apparent attitude?"

"He seemed to be angry," I felt myself obliged to say.

"Angry at the gentlemen of the committee?"

I was indeed sorry to give this evidence, but I was forced to do it. To decline to answer would be absurd, and, after all, everybody knew that Morland and his father were at odds in the matter. So I said, "No, he was addressing his son."

"Ah! And he seemed to be angry?"

"He did."

"Then, they were quarrelling?"

"As to that, I cannot say. I merely tell you what I saw: that Mr. Van Wyck was addressing his son, and that he had the appearance of being angry."

The coroner excused me then, and, turning to Morland, said directly, "Did you quarrel with your father last evening?"

"I told him what I thought of his procedure," replied Morland. "I make no secret of the fact that I tried my best to persuade my father not to give away his fortune."

"And do you persist in your assertion that when you left your father at midnight his secretary was still with him?"

"I do," said Morland firmly.

"And you deny this, Mr. Lasseter?"

"I do," replied the secretary, quite as positively.

This deadlock was a peculiar feature of the situation. Both men could not be telling the truth, and, considering Morland's greater reason for desiring that the great gift should not be made, perhaps it was not strange that many of the audience began to turn upon him the eye of suspicion.

Everybody now had testified, and the coroner began summing up.

"I have had no direct evidence," he said, "that would tend to cast suspicion on any person. I think we must all admit that since the room was locked and barred on the outside, Mr. Van Wyck's death was not a murder. I think the erratic mind of the deceased gives us reason to assume a sudden attack of insanity. I think we must agree that if it was suicide, there was no possible means or method, unless we accept the really clever suggestion of the icicle."

At this point Mr. Markham interrupted the coroner.

"I think we may discard the icicle theory," he said, "as I have found the weapon with which the crime was committed. Here it is."

Stepping forward, he laid on the table in front of the coroner a small, sharp implement partly covered with brownish stains.

The coroner looked at it as if he could scarcely believe his eyes. "What is it?" he said, picking it up gingerly.

"It is an implement used in embroidering," said Mr. Markham. "It is called a stiletto, and it forms part of every lady's sewing equipment."

The audience were fairly breathless with suspense. Swayed by the slightest hint, they were quite ready to drop suspicion of Morland and turn it toward the women of the family.

"Where did you find this?" said the coroner.

"In Mrs. Van Wyck's dressing-room," returned the detective.

"Is it your property?" asked the coroner of Anne.

"Yes," she replied, after a glance at the stiletto. "It belongs in my work-basket."

"Can you account for these stains upon it?" pursued the coroner, and he showed far more agitation than did the woman he addressed.

"I cannot," she replied coldly. "I have never used it except for embroidery purposes."

Now, of course if Anne Van Wyck had used this implement for the purpose of killing her husband, she could scarcely be expected to say so. And so her flat denial carried little weight.

"Where in the dressing-room was it found?" asked the coroner.

"Hidden beneath a pile of towels in a cupboard," replied Mr. Markham.

Whereupon the coroner inquired of Doctor Mason if the stiletto would have been a possible instrument of death.

"Mr. Van Wyck was stabbed with some weapon about that size," replied the doctor gravely.

"And are these brownish stains upon it stains of blood?"

"That I cannot tell without subjecting them to analysis," returned the doctor, but his hearers were impressed with the thought that he was endeavoring by delay to give Anne the benefit of the doubt.

"I think," went on the coroner, in a hesitating manner, "that this piece of evidence must change the trend of our inquiries. Mrs. Van Wyck, did you or did you not put this stiletto in the place where it was found?"

"I did not," replied Anne quietly.

"Do you know who did place it there?"

"I do not."

"Of course," said the coroner, "the discovery of this instrument in this condition does not necessarily implicate its owner. Other hands might have used it and secreted it where it was found, perhaps with the intent of diverting suspicion. Who has the care of your dressing-room, Mrs. Van Wyck?"

"My maid, Jeannette."

"Let her be summoned," the coroner ordered.

But Jeannette was nowhere to be found. She had disappeared, no one knew when or where. To the minds of most present, this looked suspicious. It was easily to be seen that the villagers were quite ready to denounce Anne Van Wyck as the slayer of her own husband. Anne had never been popular with the village people. Clever and highly strung as she was, she had found little in common with their ordinary and, to her, stupid pursuits. And now they were quite ready to believe the worst of her.

Anne herself looked supercilious and scornful. "I have no notion where my maid has gone," she stated, "but I am positive that she is in no way implicated in this tragedy. She may have gone on some errand, and will doubtless return soon. I am entirely sure she can give you no information or enlightenment as to the crime that has been committed in this house, any more than I can."

"And you can tell us nothing, Mrs. Van Wyck, more than we know already?" the coroner said, floundering a little in the complexity of his emotions.

"No," replied Anne quietly.

The coroner fidgeted uneasily, and then said, "It is impossible to carry matters further without the testimony of the maid, Jeannette. I therefore declare this inquest adjourned for one week, by which time I trust we may have further and more definite evidence."

The jury, to a man, looked decidedly relieved, but it was a rather disappointed audience that filed slowly out of the house. To my mind, the coroner's reason for adjourning the inquest was a pretext. I think he felt sure that if the jury had had to decide then and there, they must have accused Anne of the murder. And the evidence was certainly incriminating. While I felt, with every fibre of my being, the wish and desire to hold Anne innocent, yet there was something terribly convincing of guilt in the fact of that hidden stiletto. But again, the absurdity of it! How was it humanly possible, even granting that Anne had used the fatal instrument, for her to leave the study so securely locked and bolted on the inside? But that was the old question, and the one to which no one had an answer. But how I hoped the answer might incriminate anybody but Anne!

The days went by slowly. The funeral was held, and with appropriate obsequies the body of David Van Wyck was buried. The house guests had all chosen to remain at Buttonwood Terrace, in response to Anne's urgent invitation that we should do so. She seemed to have a dread of being left alone with her step-children, and it became more and more evident that matters were far from harmonious between her and David Van Wyck's son and daughter.

The day after the funeral I had a long talk with Mr. Markham.

"There is no doubt in my mind," he declared, "that Mrs. Van Wyck is the guilty party. We never can fasten the crime upon her, for it cannot be explained how she left the room locked up. But it must be that she did do so in some clever way."

"But there isn't any such way," I objected. "If it were the mere turning of a key, it might be done from the other side, but heavy bolts cannot be shot into their sockets except by a person on the inside of the room. And again, waiving the mystery of the locked room, we are as well justified in suspecting Morland or Barbara as Anne."

"That is true," agreed Markham. "But the stiletto was found in her room, and her maid is missing."

"Strange about Jeannette," I observed. "Suppose we set out to trace her. That would be at least a step in the right direction."

"There have been very few steps taken in any direction," said the detective moodily. "My own movements are hampered by orders from the family. Of course there's no one to say what I shall do, except Mrs. Van Wyck and her two step-children. And every direction in which I wish to investigate is forbidden by one or another of those three. Sometimes I think they are all in connivance, and their in-harmonious attitude toward one another is a mere bluff."

This was a new idea to me, and I pondered it. But I could n't think it a true theory, and said so.

"Maybe not, maybe not," said Markham; "but they do act mighty queer. Miss Barbara, for instance, begged me if I found any clues which might incriminate her brother, to suppress them and tell nobody."

"Did she really suppose that you would do that?" I asked.

"Yes, she was very much in earnest. But I haven't found anything that points to Morland definitely. If I did, I'd show it up fast enough."

"I should hope so," I returned emphatically. "I'd far rather suspect Morland of his father's death than Mrs. Van Wyck."

"Yes, so should I. But it's a mystery, whichever way one turns. I can't seem to make any start. But, as you say, Mr. Sturgis, it would be a good idea to hunt for that maid."

It proved not to be a difficult matter to find Jeannette, for we soon discovered that she had gone to stay with her sister in a neighboring village. I could n't help thinking that Anne had known all along where the girl was, for she seemed rather annoyed than otherwise that we had made the discovery.

At any rate, Jeannette was brought home, and closely questioned by Mr. Markham and myself.

And the result of the questioning was to eliminate entirely the stiletto as incriminating evidence. Jeannette explained that she had used that stiletto to dig a refractory cork out of a bottle of bronze shoe-dressing. The bronze had given the metal a reddish stain, which she could not remove, and she had hidden it, lest she be scolded for having used the dainty implement for such a purpose. Markham was frankly disappointed. I can't think he wanted to prove Anne guilty, but his pride was hurt at having his cleverness in finding the stiletto of no avail.

"But," I said to Jeannette, "why did you run away?"

"I did n't run away," she said. "I merely went to visit my sister."

"But you took a strange time to do that, when your mistress was in such trouble and sorrow."

"I thought I'd better go," responded Jeannette; and Markham jumped at this admission.

"Why did you think it better to go?" he demanded.

But Jeannette turned pale and looked very much frightened. "I did n't have any reason," she said, beginning to cry. "I just—I just thought I'd go."

We tried every possible way to learn more from her, but without success. She became hysterical and stupid by turns, and finally refused to answer our questions. Markham declared afterward that this attitude on Jeannette's part was strongly against Anne, but this I would not believe.

As a matter of fact, I was the only one who aided Markham in his

investigations, or who even seemed interested in their results. Sometimes Anne would talk with us, but she was so contradictory and made such untenable suggestions, that I could scarcely find out what her desires or intentions were.

Barbara had taken the stand that she wished investigation stopped. I could not learn her reasons for this, but I began to think it was because she feared what might be learned from them. Morland, I had reason to think, knew more about the matter than he was willing to tell. Whether he was guilty himself, or whether he knew the guilty person, I could not decide, but I was sure one or the other must be the case.

I talked it all over with Condron Archer. He seemed to me to look at the matter very sensibly. "On the face of things," he said, "you must admit, Sturgis, that it looks as if one of the three Van Wycks must be implicated. So it appears to me that if we can throw suspicion elsewhere, it would save the Van Wyck family."

"And you would advise that?" I said in surprise. "You would willingly cast suspicion on an innocent person in order to shield one of the Van Wycks?"

He looked straight at me. "Would n't you," he asked, "if it were Anne who was in danger?"

"I don't know," I said slowly.

"You ought to know," he declared. "Look here, Sturgis, what is the use of denying the truth to each other? You are in love with Anne Van Wyck, and so am I. I don't for a moment believe that she killed her husband, but if she did, I'd rather not know it. Now, should we not do anything in our power to divert suspicion from her? I would n't accuse or convict an innocent man, but if by directing suspicion away from Anne we can save her, let us do so. And then afterward, let the better man win her."

I had little doubt from Archer's assured air that he felt certain he himself would prove the better man, but I was not so sure of this. However, for the moment I must consider his proposition. I told him that I would certainly do all in my power to shield Anne, but it was because I believed her innocent, and not because I feared she was guilty.

But he merely shrugged his shoulders at this, and gave me the impression, without saying so, that he thought me insincere.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SEARCH FOR THE PEARLS

It was a strange sort of gloom that hung over us all at Buttonwood Terrace. It was not exactly sorrow; indeed, there was little evidence of real grief for David Van Wyck. His children, if they mourned for

him, did not do so openly; while his wife seemed stunned rather than saddened. I could not understand Anne. She seemed to pass rapidly from one strange mood to another. Now she would be most anxious to discover the murderer and avenge the crime, and again she would beg of us to discontinue all investigation.

Archer watched her closely. It seemed to me he suspected her, and wanted to make sure, but he wanted no one else to suspect her.

David Van Wyck had died on Friday night, and the funeral had occurred on Monday. It was now Wednesday, and the inquest would be resumed in a few days. But to my way of thinking, we had little if any more evidence to go on. Jeannette had explained the stiletto, but who knew if she had told the truth? Doubtless she would lie to shield Anne, for she was devoted to her mistress, and the reasons she had given for going away seemed to me far from plausible. Moreover, Anne had expressed no surprise or annoyance at the girl's absence, which I was forced to admit looked as if the mistress had thoroughly understood it.

It was on Wednesday morning that I was strolling along the terraces, thinking deeply, when I became aware of voices below me. I glanced down a winding, rustic stairway and saw Anne and Condron Archer. He seemed to be pleading with her, and she looked disturbed and a trifle defiant. I turned away, having no desire to be an eaves-dropper, but as I turned, Archer's voice rose in emphatic declaration, and I could n't help hearing his words.

He said, "Anne, I know you took the pearls. Now, promise you will marry me some day, and so give me the right to shield and protect you in this trial."

The shock of his speech was so great that I involuntarily paused for an instant, and I heard Anne say, "I deny that I took the pearls. If you think I did, you may search for them. I defy you to find them!"

I hurried away from the spot, suddenly realizing that I was listening; and I am quite willing to confess to a strong desire to listen longer. But this I would not do, partly because my sense of honor forbade it, and also because Anne was the woman I loved, and I would not listen to a word of hers that was not meant for my ears.

A moment later I met Barbara and Morland, and they too were talking of the missing pearls.

"Don't you think, Mr. Sturgis," said Barbara, "that we ought to make a thorough and systematic search of the house for those pearls before we consider putting the matter in the hands of the police. They represent a fortune in themselves, and I am sure that my father hid them after he had lost control of his mind. It seems to me, then, that they must be somewhere in the study, and we ought to be able to find them."

"It can certainly do no harm to search," I responded, non-committally, "but I supposed you had already done so."

"We have, in a general way," said Morland; "but Barb means to try to find some secret cupboard or sliding panel hitherto unknown."

"I'm with you," I said. "Let's begin at once. Anything is better than doing nothing; and I do think, Morland, that you're making very little effort to solve the whole mystery. If I were you, I should call in Fleming Stone."

"No!" cried Barbara, so sharply that I was surprised. "There is no occasion for such a thing," she went on. "Father killed himself. His mind gave way at the last, and he was not responsible. Also, he hid the pearls, and we can find them. Come on and let us begin the search. Here are Anne and Mr. Archer—they will help, I'm sure."

After listening to Barbara's request, both Anne and Archer heartily agreed to help in a thorough search. We went at once to the study. Markham and Lasseter were already there, and we all went to work with a will. I think I'm safe in saying that no room was ever searched more carefully than the Van Wyck study was that day. We divided it into sections, and each of us searched every section. Mrs. Stelton and Beth Fordyce joined us later, and every possible hiding-place was ransacked. Nor was it an easy task. There were many cupboards and desks and odd pieces of furniture with secret drawers. And besides, there were many possible hiding-places in the massive and intricate ornamentations. The enormous carved fireplace seemed to mock at us with its possibilities. The carved wainscot and stuccoed wall-panels all showed interstices which, though in some cases thick with the dust of time, were large enough to hold a pearl necklace.

Anne was perhaps the most energetic of all the searchers. She ran up the spiral staircase to the musicians' gallery and called for some one to come and help her. "For," said she, "this carved railing is simply full of places where anything could be hidden!"

As I looked up and saw Anne leaning forward with both hands on the balcony rail, I thought I had never seen a more beautiful picture. Whether it was the mere exertion of the search, or the result of some secret knowledge of her own, her cheeks were flushed and her eyes were bright with an unnatural excitement.

I ran up the iron staircase, myself, in response to her invitation, and as no one followed us, I drew her back into the shadow of the curtain draperies, and, clasping both her hands in mine, I said earnestly, "Anne, you don't know where the pearls are, do you?"

Her hands turned cold in mine, and the color died from her cheeks. "How dare you!" she whispered. "What do you mean? What are you implying?"

"Nothing." And, unable to control myself, I clasped her in my

arms. But only for a moment, and then, my senses returning, I released her, and said calmly, "I mean nothing, Anne. Forgive me, I lost my head for a moment. But you must know what I shall some day tell you, that I love you, and I shall yet win you. Hush, don't answer me now! But just remember that I have utter faith in you, and because of that faith I shall probe this whole mystery to its farthest depths. I shall learn the truth, the whole truth, and then, Anne, when it is the proper time, I shall claim you, and you will give yourself to me!"

I have wondered since how I had the courage to make these statements, for Anne gave me no encouragement. She merely stared at me, her dark eyes seeming to burn like coals of fire in her white face. But as I finished she gave a little despairing sob, and said pitifully, "Oh, Raymond, you don't know, you *don't know!*"

And then Beth Fordyce came up to the gallery, and both Anne and I controlled ourselves sufficiently to speak casually, as we all continued our search. The gallery was six feet wide and extended across the whole end of the room, except for a space of about four feet from either side-wall. It rested on six enormously heavy brackets, and its railing, about three feet high, was also heavy and elaborate. Miss Fordyce looked over the railing in despair. "We never can look into every cranny of those brackets," she said.

"We can do it by ladders from below," I returned; "but I will say that I never saw any room so marvellously well provided with hiding-places."

Anne stood at the end of the gallery, but not the staircase end, and looked at the great cartouche that formed the corner of the cornice, but which was so massive that its lower end was on a level with the gallery.

"I can't reach it," she said, stretching out her hand toward its plaster scroll-work; "but the pearls *could* be in any of those gilded crevices."

"And there are four of those great ornaments in the room," said I, looking hopelessly around at the cornice. "But if Mr. Van Wyck secreted his jewels in one of them, he must have had a long ladder; and where is the ladder?"

"He might have had a rope-ladder," suggested Mrs. Stelton, looking self-conscious, as if she had voiced a brilliant idea.

"But, even so, it must be somewhere, and we have found nothing of the sort," I said.

Well, the search lasted all the morning, without the least result. And, to my surprise, after luncheon Mr. Markham proposed that we should search the other rooms of the house. "I have my own reasons for this," he declared, and as this was the first time I had known him to assume the mysterious air which is part of the stock in trade of every

self-respecting detective, I began to hope his reasons might be sound ones.

No one was enthusiastic about a further search, but all agreed to it, except Anne. She declared that the privacy of her own rooms should not be invaded, and she refused to allow search to be made in them.

At this, I saw Archer look at her intently; I saw Anne flush with anger and dismay; and I saw Mr. Markham alertly observing both.

"It is a mere matter of form, Mrs. Van Wyck," he said; "but I must insist upon it. And of course you must see that to close your rooms to our search would look——" He hesitated; even he could not voice the implication he was about to make, in the face of Anne's scorn.

"That will do," she said coldly, and at once led the way to her own apartments.

Her bedroom, dressing-room, and bath-room were subjected to a search, but, on the part of most of us, it was perfunctory and superficial. Except the detective, not one of us was willing to open the cupboards, boxes, or bureau-drawers. But Mr. Markham darted here and there, opening drawers, boxes, and baskets, one after another. I chanced to be sitting by a table on which was a gilded Florentine chest, which was locked. Markham demanded the key, and Anne gave it to him. But the chest was entirely empty, save for several old photographs carelessly flung in.

Disappointed, the detective stared thoughtfully about the room.

"You must understand, Mrs. Van Wyck," he said smoothly, "that we have no suspicion, but at the same time we must make this search a thorough one. And I think we have examined everything except the book-shelves. I must ask now that the books be taken down."

The book-shelves, which were built against the wall, covered nearly all one side of the room. At Mr. Markham's orders, the books were taken down, three or four at a time, and returned to their places; but, although there was plenty of space behind them, no pearls were discovered.

"Shall we open each book?" inquired Mr. Archer sarcastically.

"No," said the detective shortly. "Pearls could not be placed in a book, but they could easily be hidden behind them, and I must do my duty."

The others had helped with the book-shelf performance, but I had stayed near Anne. She was trembling like a leaf. If she *had* hidden the pearls behind the books, and feared their discovery, she could not have been more nervously agitated. I noticed, too, that Archer was watching her closely, even while he was busily engaged in taking down and putting back the volumes.

In an effort to distract Anne's attention, and perhaps to calm her unrest, I said, "How did you like the vase I brought you?" and I glanced at it where it stood on a small side table.

"It is beautiful!" she said, and she thanked me with her eyes. "I have never seen a more exquisite piece of Venetian glass. But so very fragile! I would not let any one but myself touch it to unpack it; and even then I was afraid it would break while I was disengaging it from its wrappings. I was frightened, Raymond, lest Mr. Van Wyck should see it. He was so absurdly jealous that it would have made him very angry. But now it does n't matter." Her lip quivered, and a strange look came into her eyes, but I was positive it was not regret that she no longer had to endure her husband's jealousy.

At last Markham declared himself satisfied that the pearls were not in Anne's apartments, and, followed by his assistants, he went to search David Van Wyck's rooms. And from there the search continued all over the rest of the rooms; and it was well on toward sundown before he was ready to declare himself satisfied that the pearls were not hidden in any part of the house.

"And so," said Mr. Markham, with an air of finality, "we may be sure that Mr. Van Wyck did not hide the pearls, nor are they in the possession of any member of this household. This, I think, proves that the robbery was committed by an intruder, who also killed Mr. Van Wyck. The mystery of how the burglar entered, and what weapon he used, will, I fear, never be solved."

"And the missing deed?" asked Archer.

"That is another mystery that seems inexplicable. Of course the fortune now remains in possession of the family, and will be disposed of according to the terms of Mr. Van Wyck's will."

The will, as everybody knew, left David Van Wyck's three heirs each in possession of one-third of his fortune. The pearls were not mentioned in the will, although Anne claimed he had verbally given them to her. Both Barbara and Morland disputed her ownership of them, but as the pearls were gone, it made little difference whose they were.

"I can't help thinking, Mr. Markham," I said, "that we have all reached the end of our ingenuity. But I also think that the problem ought not to be given up, and that it is now time to call in a more expert investigator. I propose, therefore, that we send for Fleming Stone, and put the matter in his hands."

"Oh, that wonderful Mr. Stone!" exclaimed Mrs. Stelton, clapping her hands in her foolish way. "Send for him, do! He can tell us everything!"

"I, for one, do not wish him sent for," said Anne, in a most positive manner.

"Nor I," said Barbara, for once agreeing with her step-mother.

"I don't think we need him," said Morland thoughtfully. "What could he find out more than we have?"

"We have n't found out anything," I retorted. "And he would explain everything in a short time."

"Is he, then, omniscient?" said Mr. Markham, with a decided sneer.

"He is very nearly so in matters of detective work," I returned gravely. "If Mrs. Van Wyck does not wish to employ him, I will do so myself; as I am quite willing to admit that I have a strong desire to solve the mysteries of David Van Wyck's death and of the stolen jewels and missing deed."

We discussed at some length the question of sending for Fleming Stone, but so strong was the opposition of the Van Wycks, of the detective, and of Condron Archer, that I forbore to insist, and the matter was left unsettled.

But later I discussed it alone with Archer. "Don't do it," he said to me earnestly. "Don't you see that to get Stone here might implicate Anne?"

"Why," said I, in surprise, "my motive in getting him would be to prove Anne's innocence!"

"Then, if you want to prove Anne Van Wyck innocent, or even to continue to think her so, don't send for Stone;" and with these words, Archer turned on his heel and left me.

I went to the study, hoping to find Morland there, and to persuade him to agree to my views. But there was no one in the study except the secretary.

"Mr. Lasseter," I said, "as man to man, won't you explain to me why you and Morland persist in those conflicting stories?"

"My story is the true one," said Lasseter, looking me squarely in the eye. "When I left the room that night, Morland sat here"—indicating a large carved seat near the fireplace—"and Mr. Van Wyck was at his desk. It all occurred as I related at the inquest. And, Mr. Sturgis, I will tell you what I have not told any one else. After going out of the door, I went around the study and half way down the front path to the road. Then, on an impulse which I cannot explain, I turned back and went and looked in at the study window—not the door, but the window at the farther end. And I distinctly saw Morland bending over his father's desk. Of course at that time I had no thought of tragedy, and I hoped that father and son would make up their quarrel then and there. I merely glanced in, and, turning away again, went straight home."

"Why did n't you tell of this at the inquest?"

"Because, though it would, in a way, prove my story, in the

face of the tragedy I feared it might make things look black for Morland."

"You don't suspect him of—of any wrong-doing!"

"No, I can't. But it is all mysterious, and I agree with you in wishing that we could have the great Fleming Stone look into it."

"Why, I thought you did n't want him!"

"Personally I do; but since Miss Van Wyck is so opposed to the idea, I should rather defer to her wishes than to insist upon my own."

"Oh, I see; I did n't understand before."

"Yes," said Lasseter frankly; "although we're not formally engaged, I hope to make Barbara Van Wyck my wife; and so, you see, I cannot endorse a course of action to which she is so definitely opposed."

This was true enough, and I told him so. I could n't help liking Lasseter, and some things about him which I had thought strange were explained by what he had just told me.

From him I went straight to Morland. "Tell me," I said to him, in a confidential way, "why did you and Lasseter contradict each other at the inquest?"

"I wondered you did n't ask me that long ago," he said, seeming not at all offended. "You see, it is this way. I was sitting on that old bench by the fireplace. But it is in a dark corner, and I was in a shadow; for after the committee left we had turned off some of the lights, and the shaded desk-light and the firelight made pretty much all the illumination there was. I was tired and discouraged with the whole matter, and I left the room quietly, just before twelve, without even saying good-night. Father and Lasseter were talking, and I don't believe they heard me go. So when Lasseter said good-night to me, as he says he did, he really thought I was there; and if Father spoke to me, why, he must have thought so, too."

This was all plausible enough, and the young man's frank manner convinced me of its truth. But there was another point to be cleared up.

"All right, Morland," I said. "That does explain things. You left the room just before midnight, and a moment or two later Lasseter went home, and said good-night to you, thinking you were there. But, a little later still, you returned."

"What!" cried Morland, and he turned fairly livid with rage. "What do you mean, Sturgis?"

"What do *you* mean by getting so excited over it? You *did* return, and you were seen."

"By whom?"

"Never mind that now."

Morland looked straight at me. There was fear in his eyes, but there was also a strong ring of truth in his voice as he said, "Sturgis, if I returned to the study, and if I was seen there, then the one who

saw me is the murderer! Send for your Fleming Stone and discover who it may be!"

Without another word, Morland strode away, leaving me completely bewildered by his words.

CHAPTER IX.

FLEMING STONE ARRIVES

WHEN I went to my room to dress for dinner, I thought the matter over very definitely, before deciding to send for Stone. It was a somewhat radical move on my part, and I was not sure that I was entirely justified; but I felt that I must clear Anne of any possible breath of suspicion. And as I was unable to do this by myself, I wanted the best possible assistance I could find. And yet everybody was opposed to the coming of the great detective. I felt sure that Barbara did n't want him to come, because she suspected the guilt of either her brother or the secretary. I could see this from the way in which she looked at both men, and from some slight hints she had inadvertently dropped in conversation. And since it seemed to be fairly well proven that Morland Van Wyck and Barclay Lasseter were the last two people known to be with David Van Wyck, then one was, in a way, justified in suspecting one or both of these men. And Barbara, fearful that Fleming Stone's coming would mean disaster to her brother or her lover, naturally protested against it.

Condron Archer had said frankly that he did n't want Stone to come, lest he might implicate Anne; and when I remembered Anne's various inexplicable actions, and especially her agitation during the search in her room, I too trembled to think what Fleming Stone's investigations might disclose.

Markham, the detective, I knew, did n't want Stone, but that I ascribed to a petty professional jealousy. Of course the two detectives were not to be mentioned on the same day of the week, but Markham, in his ignorance, considered himself quite the peer of Stone.

But, on the other hand, Lasseter, I knew, really wanted Stone, and only refrained from saying so out of consideration for Barbara. This to me was a fair proof of Lasseter's own innocence. And, indeed, no breath of real suspicion had fallen on the secretary, except the general fact that he had had opportunity to steal the pearls, had he been inclined to do so.

But what had brought my inclinations to a positive decision was the fact that Morland had said to send for Fleming Stone. He said it in the heat of passion and under the influence of anger; but he had said it, and I decided to consider that as authority. So I concluded to write at once, before Morland could retract that tacit permission.

I made a rapid toilet, and found I had time enough left before dinner to write my letter.

It was not an easy matter, for I was not one of the principals in the case, and I did n't wish to tell Stone of my hopes regarding Anne. But I wrote a straightforward account of everything, and I begged him to come at once. I told him frankly that most of the household were opposed to his coming, but that Morland had sanctioned it, and that if there were ever any question of authority, I would assume all responsibility of having asked him, and would also be responsible for the financial settlement. As I wrote, my mind became more firmly made up that I was doing right. I could never marry Anne while she was under this cloud, and, even should she refuse to marry me, I must free her from any taint of suspicion regarding her husband's death. Of Archer's hint that Stone's coming might convict Anne of the crime, I resolutely took no notice. If I could believe such a thing of the woman I loved, I should be utterly unworthy of her.

But I wrote nothing of all this to Stone. I told him the simple facts of the case as I knew them; I told him the indications and evidences as I knew them; and I must admit that it did seem a tangle. I felt that we had been either stupid or inefficient in our endeavors to unravel the mystery; for they certainly had led nowhere. All suspicion of any person fell to the ground before the undeniable fact of that sealed room. And all suspicion of suicide fell to the ground in the absence of any weapon. Truly it was a case worthy of Fleming Stone's attention, and I hoped with all my heart he would take it up.

With the thought of helping him to understand it all, I wrote him everything we had done. I told of Jeannette's disappearance, of the hidden stiletto, and of her subsequent explanation. I told him of our exhaustive search for the pearls, and I told him, too, though I hated to, how nervous and agitated Anne was when we searched her bookshelves. And then I told him, though I fully realized that all these things pointed in one direction, of the last words David Van Wyck said to his wife as he left the drawing-room. How he had told her he was going to give away the pearls she looked upon as her own, and how he had said, "Now don't you wish I was dead?" I admitted to him that Anne was very strongly opposed to the munificent gift her husband had intended making, but stated also that the disappearance of the deed was quite as favorable to the wishes of the two step-children as to those of the wife.

I told Fleming Stone all this, and I told him, too, that I believed Anne Van Wyck innocent; but for this belief I could give no reason.

That letter went off Wednesday night. I sent it to the permanent address in New York which Stone had given me, though of course I had no means of knowing whether he was there or not.

But by good fortune he was in New York, and he replied to my letter at once, so that late Thursday afternoon I received his reply.

To my satisfaction, he declared himself willing to undertake the case, and incidentally complimented me on the clearness of my account and the definiteness of my written details. He said he would arrive Friday morning, and he begged me to keep the room from being disturbed any further. "Though, I dare say," he wrote, "that by this time all possible clues are removed or destroyed through ignorance or carelessness. However, lock up the room at once, and let no one enter it until I get there."

This instruction was scarcely necessary, for the study had had few occupants since the tragedy. Everybody avoided the place, and the servants could scarcely be induced to enter it. I knew it had not been swept or dusted since the fatal night, and I hoped that Stone's marvellous powers could find clues where we had seen none. To be sure, we had searched it thoroughly for the pearls, and no one of us had then found anything in the way of evidence. But we were not trained observers, and I had great hopes of Stone's wizardry.

After dinner, I walked on the terrace with Anne. I had announced at the dinner-table that I had written for Fleming Stone, and that I had done this with Morland's consent.

I glanced at Morland as I said this, but he made no response beyond a slight affirmative nod. There was a silence after my announcement, and then Mrs. Stelton began to babble, and Beth Fordyce began a rapturous eulogy of Fleming Stone and his work. But the others said nothing, either for or against the coming of the detective.

As we walked on the terrace, I tried to draw Anne out on the subject. But she only said wearily, "It does n't matter. It would have to come out some time, I suppose. Shall you mind, Raymond, when your friend Stone proves me a criminal?"

"I don't think he will do that, Anne," I said very gently, for I could n't think it; and yet her despairing tone alarmed me more than if she had been angry or deeply disturbed.

And then the others joined us, and the conversation became general. But, seemingly by tacit consent, the subject of the crime or the coming of the new detective was not touched upon. Even Mrs. Stelton seemed to feel the restraint that was upon us all, and for once refrained from making her usual flippant and ill-timed observations. The party broke up early, and we all went to our rooms. The men did not congregate in the smoking-room as usual, but parted on the landing with brief good-nights.

I, for one, felt heavy of heart. Anne's definite speech had frightened me, and I wondered if in sending for Stone I had precipitated the very

calamity I wished to avert. But it was too late now for regret. I had put the matter in other hands, and I must abide by the consequences. And yet, though I could still hope for Anne's innocence, though my heart still whispered, "Anybody but Anne!" I was far from having the same confidence that I had felt earlier in the day.

The next morning Fleming Stone came. The moment I saw him, I was glad I had summoned him. He looked so strong, so capable, and so resourceful, that I knew instinctively he would reach the truth. And, after all, it was the truth we wanted—or ought to want.

We congregated in the drawing-room to meet him, and his reception was more like that of an honored guest than an official detective. He greeted each one individually and with the utmost cordiality and kindness. But after a few polite commonplaces of conversation, he rose alertly and declared himself ready to begin the business in hand.

"I assume I have the freedom of the house," he said, turning to Anne, who responded merely by a bow.

She was frightened, I could see that, and yet there was nothing in Fleming Stone's manner to inspire alarm. Indeed, he looked at her with an intent admiration, as he had done on his former visit, and I realized that he would give her every possible benefit of doubt.

"I shall go to the study first," he said, "and I should like to be accompanied only by Mr. Sturgis. After my investigations there, I may want to ask some questions of the rest of you."

I wanted to feel that Stone was taking me with him because I might be of some assistance, but this vain hope was quickly shattered.

"I want you with me, Mr. Sturgis," he said, as we entered the study and he closed the door, "first, because you are my employer; and also because you are the only one of this household who cannot possibly be implicated in this crime."

I suppose I looked my amazement, for he went on, "That does not mean that all the rest are implicated, but you are the only one who I know is not."

"How do you know that, Mr. Stone?"

"First, from the letter you wrote me, which leaves you free of suspicion, while it leaves every one else open to the possibility of it. Second, because you had no motive for the deed."

"But I——"

"You need n't finish; I know you are deeply attracted to Mrs. Van Wyck, but you would not murder her husband in order to win her, and then send for me to come out here to discover the criminal!"

"No, I would n't," I replied, almost smiling at the way he put it. "And now, Mr. Stone, if I can help you in any way, I shall be only too glad."

"I think I shall not require help, thank you; I ask only freedom from interruption, and, possibly, answers to occasional questions."

If the words were a trifle curt, the tone was not at all so, and I willingly sat down, content to watch the great man at his work.

As I had surmised he would do, he scrutinized every part of the room; at first with sweeping glances, and then focussing his attention on various details. I had told him in my letter of the security with which the room was locked and bolted on the inside, and he examined all the fastenings of doors and windows with utmost care and interest.

"I think I can safely say," he remarked, "that I have never seen a room so absolutely impossible of ingress. And yet some one entered and left while it was thus bolted and barred."

"It was not a suicide, then?"

"Certainly not. It was a case of wilful murder."

"Committed by an intruder?"

"Yes; by an intruder of exceeding cleverness, of marvellously cool nerve, and——"

"And of great physical strength?" I prompted.

"Not necessarily," said Stone, looking sharply at me. "I don't deduce especial strength."

I felt ashamed, for I realized in a sudden flash that I had said that hoping to learn that his thoughts were not directed toward Anne.

"What—what did this intruder do with the weapon he used?" I stammered, partly to hide my confusion.

"He left it behind him, in plain view of every one. I fear, Mr. Sturgis, you are unobservant."

"Wait a moment," I cried, stung by his evident scorn of what we had done, or, rather, what we had failed to do. "Do you mean to tell me that the weapon is even now in this room?"

"It is; and in plain sight."

"Don't tell me where; let me find it for myself," I cried, gazing wildly around.

"Find it if you can, but as you have overlooked it all these days, how can you expect to see it now?"

"I'm completely mystified," I said. "We searched this room so carefully for the pearls, that I would have sworn we must have found a weapon, had there been any to find. Show it to me, Mr. Stone."

"There it is;" and Fleming Stone pointed quietly to a bill-file which stood on the desk. It was of the ordinary type, with a heavy bronze standard and a long, sharp, upright spike. The bills and papers on it reached nearly to the top, but as soon as my attention was drawn to it, I realized that with the bills removed it would indeed be a deadly weapon, and would correspond in every way to the weapon which the doctor declared must have been used.

"I can only suppose," I said, "that it escaped our attention because of its very obviousness."

"Not only that," said Stone, "but it was inconspicuous, being nearly covered with the bills; and, moreover, you looked only for a definite weapon, and not for an ordinary implement used as one."

"How did you come to notice it so quickly?"

"Because you had told me no weapon could be found, with the exception of the possible stiletto. And that did not greatly impress me, for no one would leave evidence of a crime in so simple a hiding-place. Even now I believe that bill-file to be the criminal's weapon, only because I can discover no other. But let us look at it. If we find a particle of blood-stain on the papers, I think we may have no further doubt."

Fleming Stone carefully lifted the bills from the metal rod that pierced them. Drawing a lens from his pocket, he examined the bill-file and several of the papers. "It was used to kill Mr. Van Wyck," he declared. "It was carefully wiped off and the bills returned to it. The particles of blood remaining on it are scarcely perceptible to the naked eye, but may clearly be seen through the magnifying-glass. You may perceive, also, some faint stains around the holes in the papers where they slid down the spike. As this is vital evidence, I will put it safely away."

Fleming Stone put the file with its papers in a small cupboard of the desk, which he locked and then took out the key.

After that, for a long time, I sat silently watching him as he proceeded with his scrutiny of the room. Occasionally he examined something through his glass, occasionally he picked up a scrap of something from the floor and put it in his notebook or pocket. At last I could contain myself no longer, and I burst out with, "Mr. Stone, do you know how the murderer got in and out?"

"I do not," he replied. "I have n't the faintest idea. But since a human being did do so, another human being may discover how."

I felt that he was avoiding the masculine pronoun on purpose, and again my heart sank, as I feared for Anne.

After an hour or so, though it seemed ages, Fleming Stone declared his investigation of the room completed, and announced his desire to see next some of the servants. I took him across the house to the kitchen quarters, and in the butler's pantry we found a footman and two maids.

After a quick glance at the faces of the trio, Mr. Stone interrogated the more intelligent-looking of the maids. "When express packages arrive," he said to her, in his pleasant way, "who attends to them?"

"A footman, sir," said the girl, with an air of proud importance at being questioned.

"What footman? This one?"

"Yes, sir. That's Jackson, sir. He 'most always takes the express parcels."

"Ah, then you can speak for yourself, Jackson. On the day of your master's death, did any express parcels arrive?"

"Yes, sir," replied Jackson. "I remember there were three came that morning."

"What was in them?"

"Supplies for the pantry, sir. Mostly bottles and jars, sir."

"And what were they packed in—excelsior?"

"Yes, sir; excelsior and straw."

"And was there no other parcel, containing china or glass?"

"There was another, sir, but not by express. Mr. Sturgis brought it. That was glass, and it was taken to Mrs. Van Wyck's room."

Fleming Stone turned to me. "What was the packing, Mr. Sturgis?" he said.

"I don't know," I replied, greatly mystified at this turn of affairs. "I brought a glass vase as a gift to Mrs. Van Wyck, but she opened the box when I was not present."

"I emptied the box, sir," volunteered Jackson, "and it was full of tissue paper cut into little scraps."

"Yes, of course," agreed Stone. "That is what a fine piece of glass would naturally be packed in. That is all. Thank you, Jackson."

Slowly and thoughtfully, Stone walked back through the house. He detained me a moment as we passed through the dining-room. "You want me to go on with the case, Mr. Sturgis," he said, "wherever the results may lead?"

I shuddered at this question, coming right on top of his discovery of Anne's glass vase. I could see no possible connection between my innocent gift and the Van Wyck tragedy, but there must have been one in Stone's mind.

CHAPTER X.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED

WE went on to the drawing-room, and found Anne there alone with Archer. They were in close conversation, and I had no doubt he was urging her again to give him the right to protect her. I knew Archer felt, as I did, that all usual conventions were to be ignored in such circumstances as these we were experiencing.

Fleming Stone spoke directly to Anne, and his calm, pleasant manner seemed to imbue her with an equal quietness of demeanor. She even almost smiled when Stone said, "Please don't think me over-intrusive, Mrs. Van Wyck, but will you tell me what gown you wore at dinner last Friday evening?"

"Certainly," said Anne, rising. "If you will come to my room, I will show it to you."

Although uninvited, Archer and I followed. On reaching Anne's dressing-room, she took from a wardrobe the beautiful yellow satin gown, which I well remembered, and which now seemed to mock at the sombre black robe she wore.

Stone looked at the gown admiringly, and seemed to show a special interest in the frills and jabots of the bodice. Truly, this man's ways were past understanding! What clue could he expect to find in this way?

"And when you came to your room that night, did you keep on this gown until you prepared to retire?"

"No," said Anne, looking at him wonderingly; but even as she looked, her eyes fell before his and she continued in a hesitating way, "No, I changed into a negligée gown."

"May I see that?" asked Stone pleasantly.

This time, it seemed to me, with reluctance, Anne took from the wardrobe a charming boudoir robe of chiffon and lace. It was decorated with innumerable frills and rosettes, and again Stone seemed eagerly interested in the trimmings. He even picked daintily at some of the bows and ruches, saying lightly, "I am not a connoisseur in ladies' apparel, but this seems to me an exquisite confection."

"It is," replied Anne. "It is Parisian." But she spoke with a preoccupied air, and I knew she was deeply anxious as to the meaning of all this. She hung the gown back in its place, and then Stone seated himself, after having courteously placed a chair for her.

"I warned you I should ask a few questions, Mrs. Van Wyck," he began; "so please tell me, first, how you occupied the time before you retired that evening?"

Anne's embarrassment had vanished, and she looked straight at her questioner as she replied in even tones, "I'm afraid I did nothing worth-while. I wrote one or two notes to friends, glanced through a magazine, tried on a new hat, and then unpacked a glass vase which Mr. Sturgis brought me, because I preferred not to trust that task to a servant."

"And your maid was here when you finally retired?"

"No, I had dismissed Jeannette earlier, and told her she need not return."

"And did you leave your rooms late that night?"

"No."

"Not at all?"

"No."

But Anne was fast losing control of herself. Her voice trembled, and her large eyes were fixed on Stone's face. His expression was one

of infinite pity, and he said gently, "Please think carefully, and be sure of what you are saying."

"I am sure," murmured Anne, and then Archer leaned over and whispered to her. What he said I do not know, but it must have been an accusation of some sort, for Anne turned scarlet and stared at Archer with angry eyes. She glanced at her book-shelves, and then back at Archer and then at Stone, and finally, with a look of pathetic appeal, directly at me.

I knew she was asking my help, but what could I do? In a sudden desperate attempt to relieve her, for at least a moment, I turned the subject, and, touching the beautiful Florentine chest on the table beside me, I drew Stone's attention to it as a work of art.

"Yes," he agreed; "it is a fine piece. Worthy of holding the family heirlooms."

"Instead of which," I said lightly, "Mrs. Van Wyck uses it merely as a receptacle for old photographs." Anne's agitation seemed to be increasing, and, determined to keep Stone from addressing her for a few moments longer, I opened the chest to prove my words. Stone glanced carelessly at the old pictures, faded except round their edges, and then, suddenly rising, he picked up two or three and looked at them intently. A sudden light flashed into his eyes, and, turning to Anne, he said in tones of genuine admiration, "Wonderful, Mrs. Van Wyck! Positively splendid! I congratulate you."

I looked at him in amazement. There was no portrait of Anne among the old photographs he held, and what he meant I could not imagine.

But Anne knew. Sinking back in her chair, she covered her face with her hands and gave a low moan.

Just then Barbara and Morland came into the room. "What's the matter, Anne?" Morland asked. "Who's bothering you? I won't have it!" He went to her and put his arm round her, and, seemingly encouraged by his strength and sympathy, Anne looked up and with an effort regained her poise.

"They're mine!" she exclaimed, addressing herself to Stone, while her dark eyes flashed defiance at him.

"I don't doubt it," he replied, and then he looked at her in a perplexed way. For a moment these two exchanged glances, and it seemed as if they had superhuman powers of reading each other's thoughts. Then Stone gave a little nod, straightened himself up, and said, "We must go on, whatever the outcome."

Then, speaking to us all, generally, he said, "I have found the missing pearls—I can lay my hand upon them at any moment. Before I do so, does the one who took them from the study wish to say so?"

Archer looked at Anne, but I looked at Morland. I had a feeling

that Morland had taken those pearls; but, if so, he showed no evidence of guilt at this moment.

Fleming Stone looked at no one in particular, and after a moment's pause he said, "Then I will simply hand them to their owner."

He went to the book-shelves, and without hesitation took down a thick volume. It was an old-fashioned photograph album, fastened with two ornate gilt clasps. Slowly snapping these open, he opened the book. The photographs from several of the leaves had been removed, and in the cavity thus made, wrapped in blue cotton, was the Van Wyck pearl necklace!

Amid the exclamations of surprise, I was silent, for I realized instantly that those photographs in the gilt chest were the ones taken from the album to make room for the pearls; and that I—I had deliberately shown these photographs to Stone, and thereby offered his quick intellect a clue to the hiding-place!

"They are mine!" cried Anne. "It was no theft! My husband gave them to me, and I had a perfect right to take them when I chose, and hide them where I chose. But because I took them from the safe in the study, you need not think that I killed my husband! I took them—the day before!"

"Anne," exclaimed Archer in a warning voice, "tell the truth, dear—it will be better."

"But you did go into the study late that night, Mrs. Van Wyck," said Stone quietly.

"How do you know?" flashed Anne.

"Because I found in there, on the fur rug in front of the safe, two small scraps of the shredded tissue-paper from the box which you unpacked. I found also two bits in the rosettes of the negligée gown that you wore, and I'm sure that the bits on the rug fell from your gown as you took the pearls from the safe. I do not deny your right to take them; nor your right to hide them in the exceedingly clever place you selected. But I must ask you to admit if this is true."

"It is true," said Anne, as if at the end of her endurance, and then she fainted.

We went away from the room, leaving her with Barbara and the maid; and as none of us felt inclined to talk, we drifted apart.

Fleming Stone seemed more than ever thoughtful and preoccupied. I would have talked with him, but he asked to be left to himself, and went directly to the study.

Soon after this, luncheon was announced, and we gathered round the table in a desperate effort to throw off the gloomy fear that overhung us.

At first the conversation was on general subjects, Stone leading the way with his kindly and courteous remarks.

But all at once Anne lifted her great eyes, and, looking straight

at Stone, said, "I know you think I killed my husband, Mr. Stone, but I did not. And why should I do so, to get those pearls, since they were my own, any way?"

I thought perhaps Fleming Stone would answer this question directly, but instead he said, "Were you not anxious to prevent his gift to the library?"

Then Morland spoke in a terse, hard voice: "You mean by that, Mr. Stone, that Anne took the deed of gift from my father's desk. That is not true, for I took it myself."

"You did?" said Stone, looking at him sharply.

"Yes, I did. I told the truth when I said I left the study before Lasseter did. But I don't think Lasseter knew this, and he thought I was there when he went away. But a little later I returned. My father was not there; the outside door was open, and I think he had stepped out on the terrace. However, I took the deed, and I have it in my possession still; but as it is unsigned, it is of no value to anybody. But I did not kill my father, and I'm telling about the deed to exonerate Anne from any suspicion of having taken it."

Anne cast a grateful look at Morland, and then continued to look at him, but with a changed expression. I could follow her thoughts, or at least I thought I could, and I thought she was wondering if, after all, Morland had killed his father. Perhaps they had quarrelled over the deed, and Morland was misrepresenting the scene.

At any rate, the net of suspicion was drawing close round the two, Morland and Anne. My heart sickened as I realized that it must have been one or the other of these, and that Fleming Stone's unerring skill would yet discover which.

"It is unnecessary to assert innocence until guilt is suspected," said Stone, in a calm voice; "and until we learn how a murderer could get in and out of that locked room, we can accuse no one; nor can we assert that it was not a case of suicide." And then he determinedly changed the subject; nor would he allow it to be brought up again during the meal.

But as we left the table, Stone spoke low to me. "Lead the whole crowd out on the terrace," he said, "and keep them there for an hour or so. On no account let them come into the house, or at least not into the study. I must be uninterrupted for an hour, at least, and then the mystery will be solved."

He had not set me a difficult task. For some reason, the members of the little group seemed quite willing to stay out of doors. We strolled down to a large arbor on the lawn, and sat there talking, sometimes all together, and sometimes in twos and threes. After a while Markham joined us, and inquired how far Mr. Stone had progressed in his investigations. Anne told him frankly enough that she herself

had taken the pearls from the safe, and Morland repeated his admission of having taken the deed. Mr. Markham was excited over these revelations, but the strange apathy that had settled down on our people was not greatly stirred by his comments. Presently Archer and Beth Fordyce went off for a walk around the garden. Mrs. Stelton asked me to go, too, but I declined, as I had my work of keeping the people out of the house.

It was just about an hour before Stone rejoined us. He greeted Mr. Markham pleasantly enough, and then turned to me. "As my employer," he said, "shall I make my final report to you?"

"To all of us," I replied. "I asked you to come here, but Mrs. Van Wyck and David Van Wyck's children are quite as much entitled to hear your report as I."

"Let us all go to the study, then," said Stone. "Where is Mr. Archer?"

"He went down through the lower gardens with Miss Fordyce," I replied.

"Mr. Markham," said Stone, "suppose you go after him." He added a few words to Markham which I did not hear, and then we all went to the study.

"I can tell you all in a few words," said Mr. Stone. "We know that Mrs. Van Wyck took the pearls from the safe, and that Mr. Morland Van Wyck took the paper from his father's desk. But neither of these had any hand in Mr. Van Wyck's death. Mr. Van Wyck was murdered later that same night. He was stabbed with this bill-file;" and Stone produced the file in evidence. "After killing Mr. Van Wyck, the murderer himself carefully fastened all the doors and windows, and left the room by a secret exit. This is the explanation of the sealed room, and I will now show you where the secret passage is. I did not know myself until during the last hour. I came in here positive that there was some such way of egress, and after a careful search I found it. As you see, the study is joined to the main house only by one corner, which laps the corner of the house for a space of about four feet. This four feet on the ground floor gives space for the connecting doorway which is usually used. The study is the height of two full stories of the house, but the study has only one story, and therefore an unusually high ceiling. The deep cornice has an immense cartouche ornamenting each corner. It seemed to me that behind this cartouche in the corner that touches the house was the only possibility of a secret exit from this room."

All eyes turned at once to the great shield-shaped affair of which he spoke. It was quite large enough to conceal a secret door, but at a height of twenty-five feet or more from the floor, it was entirely inaccessible.

"It seems inaccessible," said Stone, following our thoughts, "and there is no ladder or possibility of one anywhere about. But I was so sure that my theory was the true one that I examined the floor in that corner and found several tiny flakes of plaster that had fallen. Then I was certain that the secret exit had been used recently. I went in the house, and upstairs to the room in which the secret passage—if there was one—must necessarily open. I found in that room a carved panel, and by dint of search I found a spring which caused the panel to open. I then discovered that I was directly back of the great cartouche, but could not open it. In a word, the passage—at least, so far as I have discovered—is an exit from this room, but not an entrance. I will now show you the means of using it."

We watched with breathless attention while Fleming Stone mounted the spiral staircase and walked the length of the little gallery. At the end he stood with his hand on the end rail, quite four feet from the cartouche.

"Note the beautiful simplicity of it," he said. Merely loosening a bolt on the under side of the end railing caused the whole end of the balcony to fall outward. As it did so, the great end bracket beneath swung the other way, acting as a counterweight, and what had been the end railing of the gallery was now a horizontal bridge straight across to the cartouche. Moreover, mechanism in the wall had at the same time raised the outer shell of the cartouche, which was hinged at the top, and disclosed a small doorway.

"That is all," said Mr. Stone, speaking to us from the gallery. "As I said, it is beautifully simple. Once unbolted, a person's weight serves to throw down the railing as a bridge, and open the cartouche. Now you will see that, as I step off and through this doorway, the removal of my weight causes the railing to swing back to place, and the cartouche to close."

Stepping off the railing upon a ledge and through the door, Stone disappeared, and the mechanism worked exactly as he had said. A moment later he reappeared through the lower door into the study.

"You see," he resumed, "that is the way David Van Wyck's murderer left this room, after securely locking it with the intent to involve the affair in deepest mystery. You all know, I suppose, who occupies the room into which the secret passage opens on the second floor of the house."

"I know," said Anne. "It is Condron Archer."

"And Mr. Archer has gone away," said Fleming Stone significantly. "I have sent Mr. Markham after him, but, as I understand it, I was employed here to solve a mystery, and not to arrest a criminal. In fact, I have not proved that Mr. Archer is the criminal. But I think no one doubts it."

It was at this point that Beth Fordyce returned to us. "Oh, Anne," she said, "Mr. Archer said that he had to go away very suddenly. He had had a telegram, or something, and he asked me to tell you good-by for him, and to give you this letter."

"It is his confession," said Anne, in a low voice, as she took the letter from Beth. "I felt sure of it all the time. Raymond, will you read it aloud?"

I was touched at the confidence she showed in me, and, taking the letter, I opened it. It bore no address, and began abruptly thus:

This is not a confession, but an explanation of why I killed David Van Wyck. I know now that Fleming Stone's penetration will discover the secret passage, which Mr. Van Wyck himself explained to me a few days before his death. And so I am going away—not fleeing from justice, but because I do not look upon myself as a criminal. I killed Mr. Van Wyck, not in self-defense, but in defense of one far dearer to me than myself. Last Friday night, after having gone to my room at eleven o'clock, I came downstairs again about midnight, with no intent other than a stroll on the terrace. I had been there but a few moments when Mr. Van Wyck joined me. I do not wish to repeat his conversation, but I realized what a vicious, cruel, and even diabolical husband he was to the woman I adored. I speak frankly of this adoration, for it is no secret. David Van Wyck talked of his wife in a way that made my blood boil, and I was about to tell him so when, his attention attracted by a sound in the study, he beckoned to me, and we locked in at the window. Mrs. Van Wyck was taking the pearls from the safe. As we watched, she carried them from the room, closing the door behind her. David Van Wyck drew me into the study with him, and exclaimed in fiendish glee, "Now I have her where I want her! I shall denounce her as a thief, and see if she will then be so high and mighty toward me!" I begged him not to do this, whereupon he accused me of being in love with his wife, and made other wicked assertions that I could not stand. He repeated his intention to give away all his money, to get back the pearls, and to denounce Anne as a thief; and he became, I really think, momentarily insane in his rage. Possibly I too lost my mind, but I snatched up the bill-file, tore off the papers, and stabbed him in a moment of white-hot anger. I do not regret it. I have saved Mrs. Van Wyck from the cruelties of a monster, and I am glad of it. But I refuse to pay the penalty for this, and so I shall disappear forever from the country. I could not do this if I thought I could ever win my heart's desire. But I know, Anne, that in the after years you will find joy and peace with a man who is worthy of your regard, though it pierces my heart to admit it. But though through crime, Anne, I have saved you from the further despotism and insults of a brute; and the knowledge of that is my reward.

CONDRON ARCHER.

I finished reading, and there was a death-like silence. I think not one in the room wished to prosecute Archer; I think each heart was praying that Markham might not find him.

"I told Mr. Markham to detain Mr. Archer if he found him," said Fleming Stone slowly. "I fear that I regret doing so."

"He won't find him," said Anne, and as if in proof of her words, Mr. Markham came in.

"Mr. Archer has disappeared," he said. "I thought he might go by train, and I waited at the station, but he did n't. Do you want him very much?"

"No," said Anne. "We don't want him at all. Don't look for him any more, Mr. Markham." And then, as the tears flooded her eyes, she turned to me, and, putting her trembling hand through my arm, she let me lead her out into the sunlight.



THE SEASONS OF THE HEART

BY EDWARD WILBUR MASON

WHEN meads are fair with green of spring,
When April's moon is bright,
Then hope is like a bluebird's wing—
It wakes the heart's delight!

When hills are crowned with rosy bloom,
When fragrant odors cloy,
Then love, like angel from the tomb,
Awakes the heart to joy!

When fields are ripe with tawny grain,
When songs of summer cease,
Then gratitude like golden gain
Awakes the heart to peace!

When winter silvers every pond,
When frost is on the streams,
'T is then that memory's magic wand
Awakes the heart to dreams!

A CRISIS FOR OUR CONSULAR SERVICE

By Dudley Harmon

WHAT will be the attitude of the Democratic administration toward the United States consular service? To American manufacturers and exporters, this is one of the most vital questions involved in the change of government on March 4. The fact that since the Democratic party was last in power the consular service has been completely reorganized and removed from the influence of party politics by its operation along civil-service lines, has raised the question as to whether the new administration will continue it in its present form.

The desires of the business interests of the nation with respect to the consular service were plainly indicated last month at the Washington convention of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States. Members of this national organization, representing all the diversified trade interests of the country, urged that the present non-partisan character of the consular service be preserved.

This attitude furnishes the most convincing evidence of what the United States consul is doing for the advancement of our foreign trade. The American manufacturer has little time for politics and less for sentiment. When he asks that the consular service be kept free from the control of the patronage-seeker, his request is proof positive that he believes the present American consul to be a man worth keeping on the job.

It was not always so. In fact, it was only fifteen years ago that President McKinley was induced to give a consular appointment to a man whose sole qualification was that he had proved himself an able ward leader. Though of foreign birth, and unable even to speak English correctly, this man was sent to one of the great capitals of the world. There, in shirt-sleeves and suspenders, he misrepresented his country for eight years, while business men gave him up in utter disgust. It is a return to the days of which this man was an exponent that the American manufacturer now fears.

This government has had consuls for more than one hundred years, but it has had a consular service for exactly six years. Since the

metamorphosis of the consular system into a highly trained, specialized, and efficient *service*, absolutely non-partisan, the exports of the United States have increased by \$476,000,000, or at the rate of nearly eighty million dollars a year. The American exporter has outstripped the Britisher, and the United States is to-day the greatest exporting nation on earth.

The spurt which in six years has achieved for us as a nation supremacy in exports was coincidental in its beginning with the divorce of politics from the consular system in 1906. The American manufacturers who have been producing this tremendous volume of goods for the foreign trade are the first to recognize the connection between the two events, and to give to the United States consul a share in the credit for the results achieved. The American engaged in foreign trade now feels that in the United States consuls, stationed in all the remote corners of the earth, as well as in the foreign trade centres, he has the services of a body almost equivalent to a corps of personal representatives. But the value of the American consul is even more keenly appreciated abroad than at home. Only a few months ago a British journal published a complaint from an English manufacturer that American consuls were putting British exporters at a great disadvantage in the competition for foreign trade.

Twenty years ago a Republican President who appointed forty-five Democrats to offices, the total salaries of which amounted to more than one hundred thousand dollars a year, would have been looked upon as politically insane, not to say ungrateful. We all remember the advertisement in an English paper for "a Protestant woman to take a King Charles Spaniel dog out to walk." Yet, since the reorganization of the consular service into a non-partisan body, President Taft alone has appointed forty-five Democrats to consular posts. All that was required of them was to prove American citizenship, with age between twenty-one and fifty, and then to pass the competitive examinations—examinations almost as rigorous as non-partisan. Yet, on the eve of the inauguration of a Democratic President, we find the Senators of his party refusing to permit the confirmation of a group of consular promotions and appointments, despite the fact that half the names on the list are those of young men from the Democratic States of the South.

Elihu Root, formerly Secretary of State, and now Senator from New York, was the father of the reorganized consular system. One day, when he was in the midst of his fight to get Congressional approval of certain features of the scheme, he was asked by a member of Congress: "Suppose some eminent citizen—say, a former member of Congress—comes along—could you afford to refuse him a place?" The questioner never got any further, for Mr. Root interrupted him with:

"Yes, if he's under fifty years of age, he can take the examinations

like everybody else. But that kind of man is just whom we don't want. The consular service is to be no longer the refuge of 'has-beens.' We must catch them young, and train them up in the service. That is the way they do in the army and the navy, and it is the only way we can ever get a consular service worthy of the name, a service which shall stand for something."

And another day a Senator burst into Secretary Root's office, soon after the reorganization had become effective.

"What's this man Asterisk?" he sputtered. "Why are you giving him a \$4,500 consulate in China, when you know that I've got to find a place for Billy Bones? Why, I could n't have been reflected if it had n't been for Billy Bones, and that consulate is just the job he ought to have. These places ought to go to the men who do the work for the party."

Only those who know Mr. Root can imagine the chill that entered the air in the dead silence that followed. Then he said: "All right. Bring Billy Bones here, and I will have Asterisk here. We'll have the Chinese Minister examine them both in written and colloquial Chinese. If Billy Bones knows more Chinese than Asterisk, he can have the place."

Asterisk is still in the service, and when he reports on the markets for American goods in his district, the State Department and interested American business men know that they can accept what he says. He is a type of the new consul, the non-partisan, whose work is his chief interest and his sole career, and who is always on the alert for opportunities for advancing American trade interests. It was a colleague of the same type who was recently responsible for the sale in Europe of a five million dollar order of American coal. Another consul of the same kind has just enabled an American coal exporter to place a fifty thousand dollar order in Uruguay, a republic of which the American who took the profit on the deal had never heard until attracted by the consular reports pointing the way to trade opportunities abroad.

The State Department has on file documentary proof of the part played by the consuls in effecting these sales. It also has a great number of letters, received without solicitation, from Americans who found their business interests greatly advanced by the consular service. One manufacturing firm in Michigan wrote that through a consul it had sold twenty carloads of its product abroad in a single order, and that by using the daily consular reports it had trebled its foreign trade within a year. Another manufacturer reported that he had placed a single order for agricultural implements to the value of six thousand dollars through a consul in a South American country, and stated further that he had never dreamed of trying to make sales in this market until attracted by the consul's reports. Sixteen carloads of agricultural machinery were sold in Siberia by another American firm, which gratuitously gave all

the credit for the sale to a consul in that country. Agricultural machinery to the value of one hundred thousand dollars was sold to Turkey by another American firm through the assistance of a consul. Another manufacturer sold abroad in a single order one hundred miles of barbed-wire fencing with the aid of a consul. Still another United States consul brought to American mills an order for a steel bridge costing five hundred thousand dollars. One consul, in a Latin-American country, has to his credit the promotion of sales to the value of one million five hundred thousand dollars in the last twelve months. Practically all of these orders, and hundreds like them, represented new business. No account is taken of innumerable follow-up sales.

Yet it was not so very many years ago that one of the political plum pickers drawing a consul's salary in a Latin-American city was receiving invoices requiring his signature through the bars of a prison cell. Though the representative of the United States Government in that city, and a splendid vote-getter among the "boys" at home, his title as consul did not save him from serving a term in jail for things which would have made even his political sponsors blush. This man's successor, by the way, is typical of the new consular service. He is not only a gentleman, but cultured, dresses well, talks well, and looks the clean, healthy, brainy American that he is. Incidentally, he was the first United States consul to be elected to a decent Latin-American club. A business man is judged by his representatives, rather than by the company he keeps, and it is our consuls who give foreigners their ideas about the kind of persons who are directing American industries. A consular service based on merit and efficiency is, therefore, a world-wide guarantee for the character and integrity of the American business man.

There is not left a corner of the world where the United States consul has not secured hard, cold cash for the producer and exporter at home. Conversely, there is not a Congressional district in the United States without its farm, mine, or factory which has profited by the expansion of foreign trade, so largely aided by the consular service. If, in the next four years, the spoils system is reintroduced into the consular service, every section of the United States, and every product, from Oregon with its lumber, to New England with its manufactures, will be the loser by the change. It is the belief that the government will keep the faith with him, and reward efficient and loyal service by promotion, that keeps our new style consul constantly digging for more trade for Americans. Shatter this belief by making the consular service the victim of the dispenser of patronage, and there is not a consul who will not feel that the enthusiasm and the hustle have been knocked out of him.

But the new service brand of United States consul does much more than sell goods. He advises American exporters and manufacturers as to the business usages and methods of salesmanship in foreign lands, and

suggests the most effective means of advertising American products. He gathers new seeds and plants, and sends them home for the American farmer to grow. Crops worth hundreds of thousands of dollars are grown annually in the United States from seeds and plants introduced by American consuls. He also protects the United States customs revenues by detecting frauds and undervaluations in invoices. One man, since promoted to be a Minister in the diplomatic service, saved the government one million dollars in this way. The consul also sees that American life and property receive adequate protection abroad. He preserves the health of our coast cities by reporting on the sanitary conditions of and contagious diseases in foreign ports.

Still another method of making the consular service even more useful to American business men has recently been adopted by Wilbur J. Carr, Director of the Consular Service since its reorganization. He has instructed all consuls to report to the department, for publication in the consular reports, dates of their probable arrival in the United States when coming home on leave, together with addresses at which they may be seen by business men desiring personal consultation with an experienced man on some project for foreign trade. The consuls on leave also spend much of their vacation time in speaking before chambers of commerce and other organizations of business men.

When seventy per cent. of the loyalty of our consuls was to their political sponsors, to the party leaders in Washington who secured their jobs for them, there could be no such thing as proper administrative control of the consular service. Neither were the consuls at all particular about exerting themselves for the government, and an order from Washington was often ignored while the consul wrote a letter of complaint to his political patron. They cared much more for keeping in the good graces of the Senator or Representative who had them appointed than for winning the commendation of their superiors in office. Could a more unbusinesslike policy be imagined in a nation whose people have always demanded value received for money expended?

Under the present system, however, when every consul knows that there is an efficiency record growing under his name in the department at Washington, and that upon the story told therein his future in the service depends, he is ever on the lookout for an opportunity to distinguish himself by superior achievement. In addition, an inspection service has been established, which serves to keep the consular corps from falling into ruts; and an intelligent system of frequent transfers keeps the individual consuls from going stale or vegetating at one post.

In view of the close relationship which has thus grown up between the manufacturers and the new consular service, it is little wonder that those engaged in foreign trade are anxiously awaiting indication of what is to be the policy of the new administration toward what has become

one of the most useful branches of the government. American business men, who have been so busy making and selling goods abroad that they have had no time for politics, are now keenly alive to their vital interest in the immediate future of the consular service. Thousands of manufacturers are depending on the daily consular reports and correspondence with individual consuls for suggestions and help in expanding their foreign sales. They now demand that they continue to enjoy the benefit of the business sense, thorough and specialized training, and long experience abroad which the new consuls possess. They have awakened to a realization that the consular service offers them valuable and impartial aid in conducting business enterprises abroad. It is not to be expected, then, that they can regard with indifference a change of government which brings potential impairment of the usefulness and efficiency of their new-found ally.

The reorganized consular service rests on a Presidential executive order, by which it was placed on a civil-service basis. Mr. Wilson as President will have the authority to revoke this order, and eliminate the civil-service features from the consular system. Knowing this, those who produced and sold the four billions of dollars' worth of American goods sent abroad last year have indeed great reason to be interested in his attitude toward the new consular service.

A BIRTHDAY

BY WILLIAM STANLEY BRAITHWAITE

THOU seest the world anew to-day,
The sunlight, and familiar things;
And all about your thoughts must lay,
A wish that sings.

What has not grown familiar yet,
Through years of girlhood's bloom,
May this day on the future set,
Hopes that illume.

Behind you are the silences;
Before you, visions far withdrawn;—
To-day we praise the happiness
Your star leads on.

"MAZEPPA"

By George Hibbard

AT the small way-station the sad-eyed man wearing the overcoat with the worn astrakhan collar sat on the large iron-bound trunk. It was marked in fading letters, "Mammoth Folly and Fancy Aggregation."

"Speaking of the procession of the equinoxes and the tide in the affairs of men," he said, "once I was lifted on the crest of the wave of opportunity, hung suspended amid the glittering froth of fortune, and then— Well, speaking of the way the cat jumps, the town was a one-night stand, though that hardly describes it either, for there was a palpitating doubt, almost amounting to certainty, that it might not stand for us—even for one night. We were giving 'Mazeppa.' Now, of course, you'll understand that we weren't an outfit carrying any untamed steed of Ukane breed about with us. For the wild courser of the plains we mostly had recourse to the local livery-stable. Mapleton, though, was n't of a size to boast a livery-stable, and the horse that the hotel proprietor sent out with the buggy had temporarily succumbed under a twenty years' strain of dragging drummers round to the cross-roads stores. Speaking of 'my kingdom for a horse,' Gridley, the manager—he played the Castellan of Laurinski, and the trombone before the show—was ready to go to the perilous extent of 'most a dollar and a half for the hire of one for the evening. A breath of relief was breathed by the entire company when by superhuman efforts and the aid of the Mapleton barber an animal was secured. We hired him out of the wagon of the Mapleton Steam Laundry. They had bought him the day before from a farmer out in the country. His name was Napoleon. You'd have concluded, to look at him, that it was Napoleon at the end of a long, hard, Russian winter. His knees were bigger than his hoofs, with his head hanging down between them, and his ribs like the gratings they have to keep the cows from straying on the railroad tracks. Still, I never liked the look of his eye, which was by way of being red where it ought to be white."

The narrator at this point took from his pocket the half of a cigar, which he lit and inserted in his mouth.

"Now, speaking of misfortunes never coming otherwise than in mixed sizes," he went on, "that was n't all which we was up against on that particular pleasant April evening. Charley Springer—Montagu Delorme,

who was lead *and* Mazeppa—had been stricken with the mumps to a degree that even Mapleton would n't have accepted him for a heroic figure. He might be all right next day, for they were subsiding, but at that moment his face looked more like a punching-bag than anything human. Well, as the subjects come up of what's one man's dope being another man's dinner, I was n't keeping back any hot, burning tears because of Charley's inability to appear. In fact, they were n't pressing forward at all ready to fall. My eyes were as dry as a village the day after it has voted prohibition. The *entente cordiale* between Charley and me was to say the least strained, owing to his riding something of the high horse even when he was n't playing Mazeppa. My chance had come. You know the story: The star out, the understudy called in; the scene of tumultuous applause at the fall of the curtain; the accidental presence of the metropolitan manager; the contract at his own terms waiting for him in his dressing-room; a season on Broadway. Of course there was n't going to be any metropolitan manager in Mapleton, or any Broadway to follow for a demi-tasse. I was bound, though, to show them what I could do, and if Charley Springer got one of those engagements about which he was always boasting, why, I might have the glory of appearing every night before an enraptured audience in 'Flesh legs, arms, and body, short tight trunks, half body of brown cloth' (which is the costume directions for the big scene), to say nothing of drawing increased pay when the ghost walked on Saturday."

Here the speaker paused to rekindle the cigar, the end of which he kept alight with difficulty.

"Since Cardinal Richelieu—I played the part in stock for a week in New Orleans, Louisiana—made use of that bright lexicon of youth in which there was no such word as 'fail,' there's other editions of the dictionary been brought out in which it's to be found fast enough, with several other distressing synonyms. I had made up my mind, though, to make good, for the reason already stated, and likewise, moreover, and according to the party of the second part, because—now, right here comes in that heart interest without which no drama can be complete. Her name was Nettie Mayhew! Being by chance in the drug-store, I beheld her at the soda-water fountain, and I heard her whisper to the second female juvenile who was with her that if she could induce 'popper' to bring her in from the farm that evening she was going to the play. How did I know who she was? No sooner had she passed from my sight than I sought the requisite information. Thereupon, I learned with further satisfaction that she was the daughter of old farmer Mayhew, out on the Millpond Road, whose holding of stock in the Mapleton State Bank amounted to more than half. Within half an hour of our walking up from the station, the village had picked out each one of the 'actors.' I saw she knew who I was, and if I had not misread a look in her eyes,

I had reason to believe that I had something to do with her wishing to be present in the evening.

"I had a temperature. Speaking in the words of an all-star cast of Iago and Monte Cristo, if I got it over, 'the oyster was mine.' Do you think I was anxious? As I stood in the balcony before the Mapleton Opera House, where the supers that were Tartar Shepherds were doubling in brass, and saw the youth, beauty, and fashion of the fairest gem of outstrung villages of the Corn Belt crowding to the door, I swore that I'd be worthy of the occasion and of her. When I went down to dress, I noticed that Charley Springer was putting up a talk that he was all right to go on. A sight, though, of his face, which resembled a contour map of the country round Orange, New Jersey, was enough to satisfy anybody; so for that night—'Only to-night, only to-night,' as the old song has it—the centre of the stage and the limelight were mine. I dressed with care in Charley's costume, which fitted well enough, and when I stood in the flies I felt the pleasing sensation permeating my being that there were no flies on me. And just then a kicking and a stamping, mingled with a suppressed murmur as if the mob was a-coming on before its cue, caught my attention. They were leading in Napoleon through the stage entrance, it being on the ground floor, with an opening as big as a barn-door into the alley. This was easy enough, but Napoleon objected. There seemed to be something about the air of the playhouse that did n't attract him. Now, if ever there was a horse that you'd say offhand could be warranted to stand without hitching, it was Napoleon. Seemed as if that was the job he'd have naturally sought in life, but now——! He fidgeted this way and that, and those cunning old eyes of his with the red whites kept looking here and there. Anyhow, they finally got him in and stationed at the R. U. side off. With a pair of blinders and a nosebag, we strove to impart the impression to his mind that no evil was intended. They say one of those old guys, Ed Keene, used to shake a prop. ladder just before he went on in one part of Shylock, to get himself waked up. The little encounter with Napoleon had the same exhilarating effect on me. From the moment I stepped into sight of the audience, I knew I had 'em. When I spoke these few simple opening words: 'Olinska! Dear Olinska! Ere yet the envious daylight robs my soul of the sweet privilege of drinking from thine eyes deep draughts of the bright liquid fire which as from twin stars of love stream through my enraptured heart,' and so forth, you could have heard a roseleaf drop from the corsage of the belle of the village green in the front row. When I came to the utterance, 'Aim at my heart; it has no defense but courage and this good sword,' the volume of sound had such a pressure to the square inch that no boiler-inspector would have passed it if it had been steam. And there was an explosion! I took five calls at the end of the fourth scene of the first act. All was going well, gloriously. The only

drawback was that I could not discover Nettie in the audience. However, she might be sitting back in the darkness under the gallery, and I played as if I knew that her eyes were upon me.

"The stage directions of Scene Sixth, Act First, read: 'The Outer Terrace of the Castle, overlooking a tract of desolate country, composed of precipitous mountain ranges, abounding with cataracts; the rocky pathway crosses a stupendous waterfall by a slight rustic bridge, and is finally lost in a chain of lofty eminences stretching into the distance.' Of course in the way of 'stupendous waterfalls' and 'lofty eminences' the most high-browed critic could n't accuse us of any over-elaboration of realism. Later there is 'music,' and the book says, 'The horse is brought forward.' Well, as to the horse, we were all there. We had a horse. At least, Napoleon would have passed with a Professor of Zoölogy, if not with judges of the Horse Show. Also, he allowed himself to be led on. His little playful attempt to land with his off hind-hoof on Rudzloff, which, if it failed to reach that character successfully, put Drolinsko out of action, added verisimilitude to the occasion. Instantly he won the plaudits of the multitude. He was restless while I was being bound to his back. Charley Springer had been obliged to go on among the 'Knights, Officers, Guards, Heralds,' where his face did n't count, and was not feeling kindly about it. He fastened those knots as if he were a committee tying up a clairvoyant. To move in the least was impossible for me—and then——

"I don't blame Charley Springer for what happened. Charley has his little faults, but he'd never play it low down like that. The leader of the orchestra was to blame. He started it—beginning all of a sudden before the time with the bars of the 'Ride of the Walkurie,' that we brought in to set the audience off. Well, it did, and it set Napoleon off. He stood straight up on his old hind-legs. Gridley cried 'Whoa!' which was n't in his lines, and the rest of the *dramatis personæ* began to make remarks for which they'd have been fined in any theatre in the country. No wonder! Napoleon was scattering all over the place. That horse was n't a horse; he was a centipede. He had the stage cleared in a minute. All the actors were looking out from round corners of the scenery, except those which had climbed down into the orchestra for safety. For an instant Napoleon stood still. Then he headed for a group which had ventured forth a little L, consisting of Abder Khan, King of Tartary; Thamar, Zemba, and some Chieftains and Warriors. He went through them like the champion Harvale quarterback through the line of a minor college for 'steen yards. Next he pranced into the space behind the back drop, where the door to the alley was. He ramped out of that into the alley, where I caught for an instant the frenzied tumult in the opera house. He clattered up the alley and round a corner. Round another corner into Main Street. As I dashed past, all the men

and boys on the sidewalk shouted, also the first of the crowd that began pouring from the opera house. A number of them started to follow us, but we soon left 'em behind.

"The cries faded away. I don't know Napoleon's pedigree, but when he got going he had speed. We were out in the open country. The road led into a wood. We tore through that. Once more black fields were on either side. There have been some rides in history—some. Paul Revere took quite a little run for the money. I once heard a reciter put it up about a fellow who rode from a place called Ghent—I wonder if it was in Michigan—to I. None of them, though, ever took their rides dressed in pink tights and little else, tied to the back of a strange horse going they did n't know where or the time he'd take in getting there. The night was clear and starry—and cold. Napoleon seemed 'most as good in wind as in limb. I began to entertain nervous doubts as to how long he could keep it up. Miles passed. Time went on. So did Napoleon. The lights were out in the houses. We met nobody in the road. The first fine exhilaration of the adventure was wearing down, wearing down to the bone. At least, I was chilled to the bone. At the rate he was going, the night air whistled over me. On, on, raced Napoleon, as if he thought that he was entered in some equine Marathon, and then, just as I was about thinking of having my berth made up for the night, he turned into a lane. He pounded down it and into a farm-yard, and brought up against a barn door with a bang that would have waked any one. I could see the farm-house, which was a big, prosperous-looking place. At once I started to call. Finally lights began to show in the windows, and at last the door opened. An old man with a lantern appeared on the threshold.

"What's the matter?" he growled.

"'Most everything," I answered. "Come and see."

"He looked about cautiously, and, concluding there was no one else, he came forward. A girl, who had evidently dressed hurriedly and held a shawl about her and over her head, followed him. It was Nettie.

"What April fool's business is this?" he demanded, and I could tell how easy it was for him by nature to be unpleasant.

"If you think anybody is going to ride a night like this, dressed like this, for a joke——" I began.

"Why," cried Nettie, looking at the horse, "it's Napoleon!"

"So it is," said her father, his curiosity overcoming his propensity to make himself disagreeable. "How in thunder——"

"If you'll unfasten me," I answered, "and let me get a little warm, I'll tell you all about it."

"Of course in common charity he had to take me in and take care of me. They gave me something to eat, and now I ask you, was n't there enough in the manner of my arrival to satisfy a girl who had followed from page to page stories of romances all her happy young life?

"'You did n't come to the play,' I whispered tenderly to Nettie, as she offered me another slice of peach pie.

"'Father would n't let me,' she replied, with a laugh which greatly disquieted me. 'But this is as good as a play.'"

The whistle of the way train sounded faintly beyond the bend as the narrator stood up and looked along the tracks.

"Nettie? No, I did n't marry Nettie. Charley Springer came out with Gridley the next morning about the horse. He'd got over the mumps. When Charley Springer and Nettie saw each other, there could n't be any doubt from the first blush that it was a case of two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one. They say that Charley Springer is supervisor out there now, and that father-in-law Mayhew is going to make him president of the bank."



THE INN

BY MARY ELEANOR ROBERTS

LIFE'S an inn, nor may we stay
Where we lord it for a day,
Dreaming, as the time slips by,
Ours the rooms we occupy.
Nay; though we be well-bestowed,
Other guests are on the road.

Friend, our moment comes to go!
The Postilion waits below!
And these halls that we have known,
Fondly thought of as our own,
Keep of us no further trace
Than the mirror of our face.

*Quickly, ere the summons falls,
Write thy name upon the walls.*

THE UNWILLING PHILANTHROPISTS

By Lowell Hardy

"PUBLIC spirit!" said the jeweller, as he seated himself beside the stranger on the bench before the door of his little shop. "There ain't any in this here town any more, as I can see."

His gaze wandered on down the deserted main street of Four Horse Flat, and then came slowly back to the stranger who had sought the shade of the broad wooden awning in front of his place of business. "It's enough to take the heart right out of a body, and what's to be done I don't know!"

He was silent for some minutes, puffing savagely at the cigar presented to him by the new-comer, and staring straight ahead of him so hard that a man working in a garden on the opposite side of the road finally came to the fence with an armful of weeds to inquire whether he wouldn't like to have his picture to hang over the bureau by his bed.

"There's some here as thinks they're public-spirited," the jeweller resumed after a short pause, and glancing fiercely after the retreating form of the man across the way—"men as prides themselves on it; and they show it by cleaning up their front yards and throwing the rubbish out into the street for people to fall over!

"The trouble with a good many," he continued, striving desperately to ignore the actions of the garden-worker, who was wafting kisses toward him, "is that they're always thinking of themselves first. I remember a man lived here once, name of William Blow—Windy Bill, he was called for short. He up and spoiled the best plan we ever had for helping out the town, and all on account of his selfishness.

"It was Ed Sparks's idea. He'd been down to Frisco to his wife's aunt's funeral, and when he got back he had it all planned out to build us a real, bang-up, cityfied cemetery that would make them coyotes over at Simpson's Bar sit up and take notice for once. The idea took like wild-fire. This miserable community just mentioned, which was directly across the river from Four Horse Flat, had gone to work and built themselves a new dance-hall and fire-engine house combined, which they was feeling mighty sot up over, and they needed a lesson. Work was started

immediate on the cemetery, everybody being so full of enthusiasm they was no trouble raising the money. When it was 'most finished George Nichols up and thought of something we'd all overlooked. We needed a funeral to dedicate it with, something stylish and first-class, with a band of music and all, and where were we going to get it? Barring accidents, the prospects was terrible poor. Nobody could think of any one that was likely to pass away very soon, although considerable hard feeling was started through several persons proposing names, until all of a sudden Sam Maker thought of Windy Bill, and everybody fell to cheering.

"A committee was appointed, and George Nichols and Sam Maker was selected to go out and interview him.

"And mind you bring him back with you,' says Gunsight Doolittle, looking at them mighty stern. 'Windy's cabin, I judge, is about half way between us and Simpson's Bar, and if them hellions get hold of what we're up to, they'll try for him theirselves. Them ghouls 'ud do anything to beat us!'

"Windy was sitting right out in the broiling sun in front of his cabin as they drove up, with a big book open on his knees. At first George and Sam thought it was a Bible, and it made them awful hopeful, but when they got right up to him they saw it was a doctor book, with pictures showing how the human body looks with its skin off, and skeletons, and such. Windy never paid any more attention to them than if they was ghosts, only a little yaller cur dog that was alongside his chair growled at them and ruffled up his hair, trying to look bigger than he was, to scare them.

"Why, hel-lo, Bill, old boy!' says George Nichols, very cheerful and happy-like. 'How are you these days? We have n't seen you in town for ages. How you making it, any way?'

"Windy never moved. He just went on staring straight ahead of him at the side of the mountain, as if they was n't there, and keeping his finger in his place in the book. They waited a while, and then George kinder backed off a little.

"Try him again,' says Sam in a loud whisper. 'He did n't hear you.'

"Maybe we'd better not go any further with it to-day,' says George. 'I believe it 'ud be better not to disturb him right now. He looks to me as if he had his mind set on something, and he might not like being bothered. Come on away.'

"No! Don't you do it,' says Sam. 'You can't tell—he might be gone by to-morrow. Simpson's Bar 'll be after him the minute they hear. You go ahead and start joking with him. Get to laughing and carrying on so yourself that you can't stop! That 'll fetch him!'

"George give him a look that would 'a' killed some people. He turned his back and walked right up to where Windy was sitting.

"Look here," he says, "what's worrying you, any way? Have you got so you can't say "Hello" to a friend when he calls."

"I ain't got any friends," Windy says, still staring off at the mountain. He waved one hand. "Farewell, cruel world!" he says. "Farewell! I won't be troubling folks much longer. I feel the grave a-calling me;" and he let loose a awful sound.

"George and Sam felt the cold chills a-creeping up their backs.

"Well, don't keep it waiting on our account," says George, very nasty. "Good-by! Have a good time, and write if you get a chance. We'll be anxious to hear. When are you figgering on passing away?" he says sourcastic-like.

"Windy looked at him, wounded. "Any moment may be my last," he says. "I kin feel myself slipping, slipping away. My symptims is getting more and worse." He opened the book to the place he'd been keeping and pointed to the page. "I found two new ones to-day," he says, brightening up a little, "and they fit me exact. It would n't surprise me a mite if I was to die this very minute. I may be dying right now."

"If that's the case," says George Nichols, unfeeling-like, "you'd better go on inside your cabin and die there. You'll be scaring people's horses and causing accidents if you go dying right out here in the road."

"Windy glared at him. "Where's your heart?" he says—"a-talking that way to a man that's teetering on the brink of the grave! I'd think you'd be ashamed."

"I did n't mean it," says George, remembering, all of a sudden, what he'd come for. "See here, Windy," he says, like he'd tried but his big, honest heart would n't let him wait any longer, "me and Sam is here on the behalf of the citizens of Four Horse Flat to invite you to come over and live with us. We want to take care of you."

"Windy looked at them pretty sharp.

"Hum-m-m-m," he says. "What for?"

"Well, it's like this," says George: "we got to thinking it over, and we decided it was n't right for you to be living out here all alone, and you not very well. It looks bad for the community. Another thing, we want you nearer to us, so that in case anything was to—er—happen to you, so to speak, we could do the thing up in first-class style. You would n't have to give it a thought. Why, we've made—I mean, we'll make all the arrangements, and be glad to."

"Windy shook his head. "No, I ain't wuth it. Tell 'em not to bother about me. It won't be much longer now, any way, and I might as well stay right here where I am. When I pass away, probably somebody 'll happen along this way from over to Simpson's Bar, and 'll find my few remains and give 'em decent burial. They've said as much."

"George and Sam both gave a start.

"'You're a-coming right along with us this minute,' says George in a hard voice. 'This is no time to argue.' He was a very determined man, once he got started, and he grabbed Windy by the arm and never let go till he sat down in the buckboard. Just as they was starting, Windy let loose a screech and began to struggle to get out.

"'Hi! What you doing?' says George and Sam both together. 'Quit it!'

"'Walter has got to go, too,' says Windy, 'or I won't budge a step!'

"'Walter?' says Sam, staring. 'Which Walter?'

"'My Walter dog. Don't hurt him!'

"George caught the cur and after a brief struggle got him into the wagon.

"'Be careful,' says Windy. 'He can't stand roughness;' but George never answered him, on account of having two of his fingers in his mouth at the time, that the dog had bit 'most off.

When they'd got to town and located Windy all nice and comfortable in a cabin down near the post-office, George and Sam went over to the New Orleans Saloon, where the committee was waiting to hear them report.

"'That sure was the reluctantest remains I ever attempted to bring into the fold!' says George Nichols, dropping down in a chair and motioning to Dan Wilson, who was tending bar. 'I'm plumb wore-out.'

"'Why, what's he kicking at, any way?' says Gunsight Doolittle, surprised-like. 'I never see such a man. Ain't we offering him the finest graveyard in the whole country? Looking at it in some ways, it's a honor to be selected for the opening, so to speak.'

"'Did you find out what his ailment really is, and if it's liable to be sudden or not?' says Lin Hatch, who was training the band. 'I got considerable to do yet with the second trombone, and I'd like to know.'

"'I was talking with him only yesterday,' spoke up Old Hicks, the stage-driver, 'out in front of his cabin as I came along, and he 'lows now he's got the Angelina Pictorialis and Botts, having read in a hoss book lately that Botts causes the hair to stand on end, which his sure does, not being combed for some 'leven years. He's taking sulphur and bran-mash morning and night, and he's got so now he 'most whinnies when he sees another hoss.

"'What he's really got,' continued the stage-driver, 'is this here tuber-coloroses that's taken holt of so many people nowadays; and living on salt-hoss and flap-jacks like he does, having no one to look out for him, nacherally don't help to build him up any. His system can't handle 'em.'

"'Fellow citizens,' says George Nichols, very confident, 'he's our man! I know the party, and we could n't 've done better. I'm willing to bet he'll be the proudest corpse in California when he sees what

we're doing for him, and Windy's a man as will do us proud, too. I'll back him against any remains in the whole durn country.'

"Following on this excitement, things was quiet for a week or so, when we all began to notice a change coming over Windy. His spirits was rising, and it was n't long before he give evidence of it. He put in most of his time reading and studying some articles he found in a pile of old magazines that had been brought him, all about diet and health and how to keep well. Next thing we knew, he up and said he had to have two pounds of steak, a half-gallon of fresh milk, and a dozen fresh eggs every day.

"My corndition demands 'em,' he says to George Nichols, who he had sent for to come and see him. 'These magazine fellers all say so. I need more albums in my blood. It's lucky I found out in time!'

"They'll be awful hard to get up in these mountains,' says George, kinder hesitating, but not wanting to refuse him right out.

"Windy give him a look. 'What if they is?' says he, pretty sharp. 'If you ain't going to give me enough to eat, what did you bring me here for? I never asked you. Git out of my sun! Is this the way to treat a dying man—a shetting off Gawd's sunshine from him? Where's your heart?' he says, glaring at George very savage.

"I'll see what can be done about it,' says George, moving sudden-like and speaking sorter soothing.

"You'd better!' says Windy, pretty short. 'There was two friends of mine over from Simpson's Bar yesterday to see me and inquire about my health, and to find out if they was anything they could do for me. They was very polite and agreeable, but they thought I was failing fast; thought probably I had wore out the climate over here.

"Don't you believe a word them horse-thieves tell you!' says George, starting up. 'I'll see to it that you get those things you spoke of right away. I'm glad you mentioned 'em. Anything else you want, speak right up, and don't you let them low-minded bribe-givers corrupt you. They'd do anything to gain their ends!'

"What is their ends?' inquired Windy, interested.

"Never mind what,' says George. 'You just look out for them, that's all. Don't let 'em deceive you.'

"Why,' says Windy, 'they jest seem to want to look after me, same as you fellers do.' He leaned back and puffed comfortably at the long, fat cigar left him by the corruption committee. 'They take a great deal of interest in Walter, too,' he says, patting the mongrel on the head. 'Mr. Scalp Hoskins, one of the leading men over there, says he is a high-bred and valerable dog. Says he's a gen-u-wine Rooshin mouse-hound, and they're terrible hard to find. He could n't see enough of him. He asked me to let him hold him for jest a minute, and 'most cried when I took him away to let Henery Sowden have his turn.'

"The trouble with people in this town is, they're so durned iggernerant they don't appreciate him. It's a pleasure to be with people as does,' he says, grunting kinder nasty-like and knocking the ashes off his cigar into George's lap. 'What's more,' he says, 'one of you fellers swore at him the other night, and I ain't going to stand it. Don't argue! I heard it myself.'

"When George Nichols came back and told what he'd agreed to do, Gunsight Doolittle took on something terrible.

"You're crazy!' he says. 'Where you going to get 'em? We ain't running a creamery. All the milk I ever seen around here came out of air-tight cows with a bunch of red flowers painted on the side, that you milked with a can-opener. Same with them steaks and fresh eggs. Where they coming from? He don't use any reason!'

"I reckon we'll have to get Old Hicks to bring 'em in by stage from Chico,' says George, pretty solemn; 'and they'll come high, too.'

"For maybe a week or so, nothing more was heard from the invalid, and we was beginning to think our troubles was over when he up and sent for George Nichols again, to tell him he'd been studying further them diet-lists, and he'd found he was n't getting enough acids into his system.

"Fruit acids,' he says, 'is required to promote the secretions of the gastric juices. I got to have fresh fruit. Apples in partickeler is good. They don't say to have 'em in pies,' he says, 'but pies is agreeable to me.'

"George never said a word. He'd been noticing Windy's cough was worse, and every time he'd come near him he was took with sech a fit you'd think he'd bust hisself wide open.

"He can't last much longer,' says George, when he came over to tell us about it. 'We'd better let him have whatever he wants. They's no use being mean about it. I say, give him his old pies.'

"Fresh-apple-pies!' yells Gunsight, wild-like. 'He's going off his head. Why, dad-fetch it, I dreams about 'em sometimes at night! Where's he going to get 'em?'

"Mrs. Sudds says she can make 'em, if we'll furnish the apples,' says George. 'They'll have to be brought up from the valley, and I reckon they'll foot up about four dollars apiece by the time we got 'em here, but they's no use in holding back now.'

"That first night they brought Windy in his pie at dinner-time over at the Golden Rule, where we was all eating our meals, it took two men to hold Gunsight to keep him from making a regular scene. Windy never offered any one a taste, but jest went on dipping up the juice while we all chewed away on the dried-apple brand and taking drinks of water. Next morning Gunsight tried to get Mrs. Sudds to make him one of 'em, like Windy's.

"'Yes, I think I see myself,' she says. 'I got nothing else to do, cooking for a lot of big hulking loafers like you. Fancy pies! The next thing I know, you'll be wanting ice-cream and Charlot Rusk for breakfast. You're getting too all-fired finicky, that's what's the matter with you!'

"'Very well,' says Gunsight, swallowing hard. 'All I hope is, I don't do anything I had n't oughter. Only last night, after dinner, I seen him a-feeding a piece he had left to his dog, and I don't know yet how I held in. I jest kept saying over and over to myself, "Don't ever do anything you wouldn't want your mother to hear about!" and I held off. When I came too, I was standing up to the bar in the New Orleans, taking a drink with a sheep-herder from Bear Valley, and I had my arm around his neck!'

"Three or four times a week, regular now, little bunches of friends of Windy's from over Simpson's Bar would come to call on him, inquiring for his health and trying their best to make him dissatisfied.

"'There's some more of them loving friends jest leaving now,' says Sam Maker, watching a party saying good-by in front of Windy's cabin. 'You'd better be going over and have a powwow with him, and see how he's standing the strain,' he says to George Nichols, who was getting to have a sorter anxious look on his face. 'They're after him pretty hard! See if he's weakening any.'

"George went over careless-like and sat down on the porch, where Windy was sunning hisself as usual, and started being agreeable.

"'Well, I reckon you feel pretty bad this morning,' he says hopeful and interested-like. 'These here north winds must be awful hard on people that's as far gone as you. Yep, they must be,' he says, shaking his head.

"Windy, who had jest been taken with a terrible fit of coughing, stopped short and opened his mouth to say something back, when he happened to look down the road. He give a groan.

"'Here comes another parcel of them Simpson Bar-ers now,' he says, glaring at 'em as they came smiling up to the cabin with their hands full of cigars and magazines. 'I ain't going to stand this much longer. I'm getting plumb sick of this here arguing back and forth—first you fellers and then them. It's enough to wear out a iron dog! Stay and have a cigar,' he says, very hospitable, as George got up to go. 'They has very fair ones, and I been smoking too much lately.'

"The committee from Simpson's Bar stayed extra long that visit, and we could hear them talking till long after dark. Then everything quieted down and they took theirselves off, and we went to sleep.

"Next morning Windy was gone! We could n't find hide nor hair of him.

"George Nichols and Sam Maker was 'most wild when they first

heard of it. We all nacherally supposed the enemy had got away with him, but we found out different when Old Hicks come in with the mail. It seems Windy left town with 'em, but he'd got so disgusted listening to their talk that when they'd got as far as his old cabin he up and piled off the wagon with his dog and baggage and told 'em to drive on. He was going to stay where he was.

"Well," says George Nichols, when he'd calmed down some, 'I'm going over and find out what has happened to rile him. He never left jest because them cusses talked him into it. Somebody here has given him offense.'

"George was back again by noon-time. 'Gunsight did it,' he says, shaking his head mighty solemn.

"Me!" says Gunsight, surprised. 'Why, what did I do?'

"You kicked Walter," says George. 'He says he saw you do it right out in front of his place only last night.'

"Why, I—— Doggone it! Sure I kicked his pup. It hopped on me and 'most bit my leg off when I was going by. I——'

"Which leg?" asked Old Man Nanny, very interested.

"Gunsight give him a look and turned his back on him. 'I'll show you the place!' he says to George, starting to pull off his boot.

"Never mind," says George. 'We forgive you. The thing has been done; but you oughter have let him.'

"What? Let him bite my leg?" says Gunsight, kinder choking and his eyes starting out of his head.

"Certainly," says George. 'What's a leg! Lots of people would be only too glad to have a chance like that to do something for their town.'

"Why don't you let him bite your leg, then?" says Gunsight, getting bitter. 'It's longer than mine, any way!'

"We've said enough about it now," says George. 'We'll call the incident closed. Windy's got pretty near the end of his rope, and something is liable to happen 'most any minute now. I never saw a man cough the way he did while I was there yesterday. Also, he told me how he's figuring to get well and go back east to his folks. He says he's been saving up for years, and he thinks he can make it before long now. This here hopefulness of his,' says George, 'is one of the worst signs with that trouble he's got. It shows he's near the end.'

"What'll we do now?" says Sam Maker, sitting with his head on his hands, mighty downcast.

"I got a idea!" piped up Old Man Nanny, very excited, a-hopping up and down and pounding the floor with his cane. 'It come to me all of a sudden, jest like a flash!'

"What is it?" says George Nichols.

"For you to go over and let Walter take a sample bite offen you

now. It ain't too late. Put on your old pants, of course,' he says, going off into a kind of ecstasy, 'and jest let him have one—no more. Don't let him glut hisself!'

"'You're no better than a cannibal!'" says George, a-pulling his legs up under him and looking like he could n't believe his ears.

"He and Sam sat up nearly all night, thinking up plans to get Windy back, and then giving them up.

"'It looks like we lost out on him,' says Gunsight, when we got together in the New Orleans next afternoon, pretty discouraged. 'Don't anybody know of another candidate we might get? Let's all try and think.'

"Everybody tried their hardest, when all of a sudden Old Man Nanny, who was sitting over in one corner of the room, spoke up sharp. 'Who you looking at?' he says to Sam Maker, who was staring into his face.

"'That's all right,' says Sam. 'Looks won't hurt you. Don't bother me. Can't you see I'm thinking?'

"'Well, you look at somebody else while you think!'" says Old Man Nanny. 'Don't you go looking at me. I'm as well as anybody and I ain't so awful old neither!'

"'I 'most thought we had one here the other night,' says Gunsight, quieting 'em down, 'when Old Man Copps was took so bad. It was one of his spells, but when we was a-carrying him in he overheard Milt Hopper saying what a impressive corp he'd make with all them white whiskers combed out on his chest, and he come to all of a sudden, and up and hit Milt right in the eye, and threatened to send for the constable if we did n't go 'way. Bill Peters, that lives with him, says he would n't go to bed for several nights after that, and Bill says he did n't get much sleep either, on account of him a-sitting up there with a shotgun across his knees all cocked and loaded—and he liable to nightmares, too.'

"'Well,' says George Nichols, who was as hopeful a dispositioned man as ever I saw, 'I reckon we ain't so bad off. "Nearly every corpse has a gold tooth," as the grave-robber said, and if we haven't got Windy with us, it's some satisfaction to know that Simpson's Bar can't claim him either. It's a even break so far. We'll ask Old Hicks to stop and see him every day and keep us posted.'

"'I'm agreeable,' the stage-driver told Sam, when he was spoken to about it, 'but he won't let me talk to him much. I tried it to-day, and he cut me right off short. He said the smell of licker made him cough! A-trying to be funny ain't in my opinion very good taste, coming from a man in his position—practically a remains! He ought to be thinking of other things.'

"Next day George and Sam sent Nigger Jim out to stay at Windy's

cabin and see that he was n't tampered with; also, he was to tear into town with the news the minute Windy passed away. We wanted to know.

"How about them delicacies we been supplying him with," says Sam. "Do we keep on with them now he's gone and left us?"

"Oh, I reckon we might just as well," says George Nichols, who was a tender-hearted feller by nature. "We can't very well go throwing off on him now, after getting him used to having 'em regular; and, besides, it won't be for long. Tell Old Hicks to send 'em along as usual. It won't break us."

"When the stage came in next day, the driver gave his report: 'The watchers is all on duty. Jim's out there, and feeling mighty important. Also, the enemy has a party on guard, too. They say they ain't going to see that old man dragged away from his little home again against his will, and darn the expense! Windy and the two watchers is having a very enjoyable time of it. When I came along they was having a game of Seven Up, and Windy was ahead. Jim and that other party that's sitting up with him each put up nine dollars against Windy's watch and chain, which was to be delivered to the winner when he had no further use for it. It 'ud make your flesh creep!'

"Something was bound to happen pretty soon. George Nichols and Sam Maker had gotten so their friends was worried about them. Gunsight Doolittle was the only cheerful person in town. He was as gay as a houn' pup. 'It's them pies,' he confided to George Nichols one day when George spoke to him about it. 'They was a terrible strain on me, liking them the way I do. Now he's left, and it's all over, I feel like a horse with the collar off. I want to lay down and roll!'

"We'll all of us be feeling that way before long now, I reckon," says George, a-trying to encourage hisself. "It's my opinion that Windy's picking at the coverlid right this minute. I was up to see him yesterday, and what do you think? He's even gone so far as to pack up all his things, ready to ship back to his folks when all is over."

"Did he say so?" asked Gunsight.

"No. I just saw them laid out there. Of course, I never let on I noticed 'em, and he never said anything either, but I tell you it made me feel mighty queer to note them preparations of his."

"It was the very next afternoon we was all sitting 'round the post-office, waiting for the mail, when somebody looked up, and here came Nigger Jim racing down the road like the devil was after him. Jim's mouth was wide open and his eyes was bulging plumb out of his head. None of us, when we saw him, had to be told what had happened. For a minute not a word was spoke, and it seemed like a air of peace settled down on the scene. Then George Nichols got on his feet and cleared his throat twice, and put his left hand into the front of his coat like in pictures of Congressmen at Washington.

"'Friends,' he says, he being one of them fellers as always has a few words ready to say whenever anything happens, if it's only a dog-fight, 'the approach of yonder messenger of Death tells us that the Grim Reaper has at last come among us, to separate the sheep from the goats. It is, of course, a sad occasion. But perhaps it will help us to bear our sorrow if we remember that while our friend—and he was our friend!—was still with us we overlooked nothing that would help to make his last days comfortable; and if we had, it's the opinion of those who knew him best, that he'd be the first to mention it!

"'But, after all, there was worse people than him in the world. You all noticed how he loved that little yaller dog of his, and how the dog loved him. And I tell you, friends, that's what shows the kind of a man Old Windy really was!' At this point Gunsight Doolittle, as was a man easily moved and had forgot about being bit, had to blow his nose twice, and several coughed a little.

"George Nichols waited till they was all through, and was jest clearing his throat to begin again when all of a sudden he give a start and then stared down the road like he saw a ghost. We all looked. Here came the stage, Old Hicks driving as usual, and sitting alongside of him was Windy Bill, straight as a ramrod, all dressed up in a brand new suit of clothes, with a spotted handkerchief sticking out of the pocket and smoking a big black cigar. Old Hicks pulled up at the platform and threw out the mail-sack, nobody saying a word. Windy waved his cigar at us, and smiled happy-like.

"'Boys, I'm glad you're all here to say good-by. I was afraid I'd miss some, and 'ud have to leave word. It's better this way.'

"'Why—er—where are you going to?' says Gunsight Doolittle, who was like a man in a trance.

"'Home!' says Windy. 'Back to my folks! I been planning on it for years, and now it's come, I can hardly believe it's true—can you?' he says, turning to George Nichols.

"George give him a look. 'What's the meaning of this?' he says, glaring. 'We thought you—that cough of yours—'

"'Oh, that!' says Windy. 'Why, I'm as well as anybody now. Them magazine fellers was right. Plenty of steaks, eggs, fresh milk, et cetera, was what did it. Also, living with you all that way helped me to save up faster to go home on.'

"Nobody answered him back.

"'By the way,' he says, 'now that I think of it, I wish some of you 'ud thank them fellers over at Simpson's Bar for all them cigars they fetched me. I been holding back on my smoking a little lately, and I think I got enough now to last me some time.' He threw away a almost new ten-center and bit the end off another one, kinder careless-like. 'Yes, I'm obliged to say, taking it all 'round, you fellers

was mighty thoughtful and generous. I dunno as I got a single complaint to make.'

"'Complaint!' bust out Sam Maker. 'Why, darn your hide, we—we—was n't——'

"'I know,' says Windy, smiling peaceful-like. 'I knowed all the time, and I'm terrible sorry to disappoint you all after what you done for me, but I think I'd better go.'

"The stage started. Windy tightened his hold on Walter, who was sitting on his lap, and turned 'round in his seat.

"'Don't let yourselves lose heart, boys,' he called back, with a last wave of his hand: "'Kind deeds is better than full graveyards," and I ain't ungrateful. If you'd like to try again,' he yelled, his voice getting higher and higher as we was left farther behind, 'the committee can let me know; because I got a friend that's——'

"George Nichols and Sam Maker took a step forward and shook their fists after the stage.

"'You can keep him!' they screamed, both together."



OF AN ARTIST

BY CHARLES WHARTON STORK

A WOMAN said, "She disappointed me.
I'd seen her picture, read about her work,
Looked forward so to meeting her,—and then
To find her just a frowzy little thing
With such a bonnet!"

Thus a journalist:

"She was n't worth my time to interview;
Nothing to see, nothing to say for print."
A poet mused, "How simple and how pure
The soul that speaks in every word and look,
That knows itself the priestess of God's beauty
And gives for love what others grudge for praise!
What courage and what patience in her eyes!
What music of true feeling in her voice!
How every feature kindles with the light
That burns upon the altar of her faith!
How beautiful, how beautiful she is!"

THE JAVELINO SKIN

By Elizabeth Maury Coombs

THE Hammonds' hall bristled—as did Hammond's conversational episodes—with trophies of the chase. Being myself a fireside man, with an absorbing collection of old violins, I respected Hammond much; for, though my imagination could readily depict a bear chasing me through ice-fields in considerable of a hurry, I could never picture myself returning the bear's lead. So it was with some pride in my prowess of even collecting a hunter that I asked for a friend of mine from Texas an invitation to one of Hammond's select little parties.

Hammond was delighted, so my friend and I rubbed our hands before the big log fire of his hall at six, and, before our host came down, watched the reflections of the yellow flames chase one another around the shadowed room. They fell now on the antlered stags' heads, then came down to play at hide-and-seek on the fur of a great mottled tiger's skin that looked like an overgrown tabby kitten. Fond as I am of kindly cats, I was right glad this one could not come bounding out of the jungle of shadows behind him and use me for his playfellow.

Hammond—a small man of perfect finish—descended the padded stairs just as six or eight other fellows came in and began to jolly with me, so I presented my Texan friend, Williams, to our host somewhat hurriedly, and did not notice until we were dining that the Texan was in his shell with the edges shut tight. Hammond himself was smilingly silent instead of noisily jubilant, as at most of his dinners.

Vainly I tried to make Williams talk. He drank his wine and swallowed hard, as is the hunting man's way in society, and I left him to realize himself by the fire later.

The lights were not yet on when we returned to the great living-hall, and the others begged off from the glare of them, "on account of our eyes and our lies—it's always been easy work for men to lie by the fire," Burnside had laughed. So I tiptoed around the black hide of some creature with upreared head, mutton-chop whiskers, and an inadequate tail-piece, and sat quietly in my corner. It was all dim enough for those beasts to come alive. The logs had fallen apart,

leaving two smoking brands and a bed of pink coals like half-buried rose-leaves, and Jamieson, an Englishman, swore as he stumbled over the huge black skin with long tusks and tiny hoggish eyes.

"Oh, I say, now, Hammond, what's the name of this devilish-looking American with the ill-fitting set of teeth?" he asked, when the fire was mended.

"That's a wild porker from out Chicago-way," answered Keegan. "Hog-meat goes crazy out there some days, right on the Stock Exchange, and eats up the equally wild speculator before he can run to cover."

"Aw, now, ye're chaffing me. Quit yer foolin'—that's the idiom you use over here, is it not?" said Jamieson good-humoredly. "What's the title of this brute of a beast, Old Man?"—turning again to Hammond.

Williams stood tall and lanky, looking down into the fire. To him Hammond spoke, and then turned to the other group, who were already smoking.

"This gentleman is from Texas, I believe, and knows those ugly customers better than I, who never shot but that one—though I am a little proud of him. He measures nearly five feet from snout to tail; and for a peccary that's growing some."

"That there peccary," drawled Williams, gently looking down at the hairy skin of the beast, "is what we call a havelino—though they spell it with a *j*—and his temper is some plainer in the face than what he is."

"Have you ever hunted them?" persisted the Englishman.

"Yas, stranger," answered the Texan laconically, "and likewise them me." He seemed inclined to silence, so Jamieson, never defeated, tackled Hammond again.

"Have you forgotten the circumstances of this one's sudden taking-off?" he said to his host.

"Nary a cire, I'll be bound!" came Whitehead's aside to me in my corner.

But Hammond for once seemed disposed to be evasive about his exploits—gun-shy, I believe, is the expression used.

"I happened one winter to be down in San Antonio," he began, "and when I'd recovered from the grip and the trip, a fellow invited me out on his ranch to do some shooting. I went, and he furnished me a guide. The man galloped ahead, and we turned out this fellow from the bunch"—touching the skin with his foot. "My horse balked, and I didn't catch up until the guide had shot off every load in his gun, and the wild hog, which had fallen a moment from exhaustion, was showing some fight. The guide was evidently funkcd, and I drew pretty quick and fired two shots, killing him instantly."

Hammond's story lacked the bloody incidents for which Jamieson's

soul thirsted, and he appealed to Williams, who now sat all doubled down in his chair, as if his huge frame were built in sections that unhinged when off a horse.

"And now, Mr. Williams, suppose we hear of how the javelinos hunted you?"

"Well, young feller, they ain't much to relate from my side. I was a mighty nice runner, so I run clean up a tree from 'em, and made up my little bed for the night until the boys came out and druv away a couple o' dozen pig-ladies that seemed to have took quite a fancy to my personal appearance. But," he went on, after a moment of reflection, "I *did* know of a pig-hunt onct that contained items of interest—in spots." He did not look at any of his hearers, but at the blaze, as if the burning prairies stretched away beyond it. I could see again with his eyes the yellow sun, the cactus flowering red and gold, the bunch-grass springing from the gray-black dirt, and beyond the horizon a haze without a hill.

"It was when I was a cow-puncher down on Grice's ranch. I had been there some time coquettin' on a cayuse 'round them cows. The new boss was from San Antone—a little man he was, with a wife who was mighty fat even for a widder-woman what had kept a hotel before she married the Old Boss, who had died of it. We called the new boss 'The Widder's Mite.' Then when cattle went up they did too—to San Antone, winters; and he had a fine house built on Laurel Heights, outer her money.

"They did n't seem to know us when we'd come in town Saturday nights, and she forgot how to cook frijoles after they had a 'turpentine walk,' as old man Grissom called it, laid up the front path. And they even went to New York a time or two.

"One time when they came home they sent to the bunk-house fer me, and I went on up. 'Bill,' says the boss to me (for my name is Bill all over West Texas—it don't flourish as Mr. Williams along the Brazos Bottoms), 'we've got some sort of a sport here that wants to hunt javelinos.' Here he puts his voice down some and comes to the end of the gallery: 'Don't let anything happen to him, Bill, like tearin' of his clothes and gettin' a cactus thorn in his left-hand thumb. But you drive up a big gentleman-pig, Bill, and make him sit down in the shade until the gent can give him a pill.' I promised and, 'y George, I done it!

"I picked him a lady-cayuse from the corral and led her up to the horse-block like I was a reg'lar lady's man. He mounted and got his hind foot in the stirrup with some difficulty.

"Don't pay no 'tention to them rude little boys at the bunk-buildin', stranger,' says I—fer they was carryin' on some scandalous 'bout me and my 'lady friend.' 'Jest gallop along by me.'

"I smelt sumpin burnin' when I see him reach by instinct for the pommel as the lady-cayuse shied a little at a black string what she thought to be a unfriendly snake, but we went on easy as eatin' snow, until my old hat blew off. I turnt 'round to catch her before she lit, when I heard somepin' go 'plunk,' like somebody had dropped a watermelon. Time I turned 'round the lady-horse was jumpin' a cactus clump, and the lady-sport was layin' flat on his back with his little shiny boots sticking straight up in the air, and the wheels of his pretty little shiny spurs spinnin' 'round and 'round in the sunlight.

"I caught his horse, and when I come back with her he had h'isted his heels down and was right side up—not a bit hurt except for some cactus thorns in the back of his bosom, where he had lit.

"I got him mounted again and took off through the brush like I had n't seen him actin' bug-on-his-back, and he after me. Soon I sighted a drove of wild pig feedin', and I cut in and rounded out a big old boar. He ran in front of me till he puffed like an old fat lady in a corset, then I hauled 'longside of him and fired.

"All the time I could hear my sportin' lady jest gallinup the trail behind me. I fired again—missed—the old boar gruntin' now—then he faced about and come straight at me. I turned my horse 'longside him, fired, and hit him just behind the ear. He r'ared up, groaned, and gave me one wicked look out of his little pointed pig eyes, and fell over against a bunch of agarita bushes.

"'Shoot him, shoot him!' I yelled to the little sport, who came ridin' up—his horse had brought him. He had both hands locked 'round the high pommel, and his gun still in the scabbord, but still I yelled like I was scared plumb crazy, 'Shoot him, shoot him, man! My last shot is gone, and he's showin' fight. Look at his tushes!' Sure enough, the old boar at that very minute bared 'em to grin at Death.

"The Sport jerked out his gun, when he could leave that friendly pommel go, and shot—missed—then fired again, and the shot went three inches from mine, just in the thick part of the neck. The old boar gave one partin' kick—for which I was mighty thankful, as I was afraid he was too near dead for athletic exercises. We loaded him up in front of the Sport, who would n't have me carry him back to the ranch by no manner of means. And we mighty hunters went home to good grub."

The Texan lapsed gently into silence. And we smoked, and we smoked, waiting for a finish that did not come. Finally Jamieson, always intent on picking up the last crumbs left from the loaf of a story, asked:

"And what then—did he ever know *you* had killed the beast?"

"No, not he—and"—after a pause—"not she."

"Now, who was *she*? Tell us the rest—I did n't know there were any *shes* in Texas on a cattle-ranch."

Williams waited awhile—he shot one glance at Hammond, who nervously toyed with a big ivory-tusk paper-knife, then the Texan went on quietly:

"Yes, there was a *she*—and she belonged to me. Concha was her name, and her eyes were like the deepest water-holes in the Brazos—brown and soft and still. I had gone with her to her old mother—a Spanish woman, though her father had been an English gentleman—after which there ain't no more to be said. I had stood before her mother in that white moonlight on their gallery, and that little Concha's face like a white flower on my breast, and my arm 'round her—but not close, for she seemed such a tender sort of bloom to me—and she was mine, and we were right happy, though not in a say-much way." The man's voice had lowered until he almost seemed talking to himself, but we followed every word.

"The night of the hunt we danced in the loft over the bunk-house. 'T war n't much grand"—he glanced around the sumptuous room—"but we thought the girls and boys had fixed it mighty pretty, with flags and candles and frijolio blooms, and put meal on the floor till 't was slicker 'n grease. Old Ponciano had come with his fiddle and his two sons that played sometimes as far away as San Antone. And they played *La Golondrina*—which the Mexican man thinks is 'Home Sweet Home'—fit to break your heart in your breast. 'Whither so swiftly flies the timid swallow?' it goes, and they played it that night.

"Then *Sobre las Olas*—and that Lady Sport—danced with little Concha, and while he could n't ride worth shucks, he sho could dance. They danced together like little children's paper boats dance on little rain-left pools. I ain't no great dancer myself—never was, always seemed like I had an extra set of legs sprout out to get in my way when I started—and little Concha said she had n't never danced before she danced with the Sport; so I kept out of the way. But when time come to take her home I went back to get my hat, and when I got to the door again she and the Sport had gone on. The boys sorter laughed, and I laughed, too—a little bit—and far away from where old Ponciano and the Mexicans was going to their *jacal* came trailing back the cry of *La Golondrina*:

"Whither so swiftly flies the timid swallow?

What distant bourne seeks her untiring wing?

To reach it safe what needle does she follow,

When darkness wraps the poor wee storm-tossed thing?"

The recital seemed to come to an end, and the Texan was again silent, until Jamieson leaned forward tensely and demanded, "What then?"

"What then?" said Williams, looking at him, but beyond him, "Why, there was n't nothin' then, young feller—except that he stayed on three or four weeks at the ranch-house—and I went away on the trail. I did n't see him no more. I went away again and stayed all winter, herdin' out on the border, and I reckon I'd 'a' been there yet, but little Concha's mother writ me to come back. She thought maybe little Concha was wantin' to see me and would n't let on. But she was n't. Seemed like she was 'fraid of me when I come."

We all waited—for what we knew not, yet for something.

"'T was two nights after this a greaser come runnin' from the hacienda to say I was to come—that little Concha had wandered away—trailed off in the dark and wet by her poor little broken-hearted, miserable self"—the Texan choked. "'T was mornin' when we located her—the Brazos runs below, and one place backwaters into a little pool of these here lily flowers. She was right there, washed ashore, and the back waters were lap-lapping at her little feet."

A shutter slammed in the distance, and Hammond started and clenched his hands—so powerful was the Texan's story to us all.

"She was such a little girl-thing, she laid in my arms like a baby herself when I carried her home. Then—well, then I went off 'way up in the Panhandle for two, maybe three years. I don't remember so very well, son"—he put his hand on the young Englishman's shoulder and steadied himself as he rose and stood by the fire. "'T was little Concha's mother wrote me to come back and take charge of her land on the Brazos bottoms, for the greasers wa'n't no good. That land is rich—why, man, the corn stands thick and black as a nigger regiment at Fort Sam Houston. If it did n't, why, how in the name o' goodness could I bring Concha's little sister—my wife that is—up here to stay at the Waldorf Eatin'-House, and let her buy all the pink silk salunies for herself and little Conchita—our baby chile—that she wants to?"

He shook hands with me and with Jamieson only, and, putting his hand on the Englishman's shoulder, said kindly: "Son, if you should feel any call to shoot javelinos next winter, come to me down on the Brazos—Bill Williams is as easy to find as a red dog would be down there. I won't mount you on a lady-cayuse, for you look mighty like a man to me—made in his Maker's image. . . . Gentlemen," he ended abruptly, "I thank you for your hospitality, and I bid you all a right good-night."

After he had gone, we all sat absorbed for a few moments; then a good blaze from the fire lighted up the gray-black bristles of the javelino hide, and, looking closely, I saw one bullet-hole directly behind the wild hog's ear, and another three inches below, that had entered the thick part of the creature's neck.

THE ROAD TO THE HEART

By John D. Swain

BYOND question, my aunt Susan makes the finest doughnuts and gives the worst advice of any one in Berkshire County. I have tried both, especially the doughnuts. The advice is almost always fatal.

Take my cousin Polly—the only pretty cousin I ever had. Left to herself, Polly would have married me long ago, and found her true soul-mate. Her inclinations always pointed my way. Of course I hate to talk about myself, but this is a fact so well known that it would be affectation on my part to ignore it.

At the time Henry Blake and I were courting Polly, it certainly did look as if his future were brighter than mine. He was general agent and a stockholder in the Waurego Woollen Company, with a fine salary and the best of prospects, while I was only teller in the Waurego National Bank, with a line-up of disgustingly healthy men ahead of me. Nothing but a cataclysm of nature, it seemed to me then, could advance me beyond twelve hundred dollars a year for a long period to come. So I was a little diffident about pressing Polly to follow her natural inclinations in the matter, knowing that Henry could give her so many more luxuries than I could, even if she missed the depth of affection which I knew resided in my heart. In the end, Polly consulted Aunt Susan, and of course Aunt Susan advised her to marry Henry. Which she did.

The worst of Aunt Susan's advice always was that people usually took it. It sounded so plausible. Aunt Susan had the habit of stating the obvious with all the air of making a great discovery. To do her justice, Henry had not at that time developed the traits which later caused Polly so much anguish. He was an unimaginative sort of chap, without intellect enough to be really "fast," and when he became dissipated after a year or so of married life, it came as a shock to us all. Henry's dissipation did not especially interfere with his business prospects, although of course it did not help them any; but he attended pretty strictly to business during the daytime, and deferred his prowling about until night, like an ill-conditioned tom-cat.

To begin with, Henry really *did* have to spend an occasional evening in the office, and he worked this fact for all it was worth. Then, there

were always one or two nights a week devoted to poker. Henry thought he could play poker. Some one must have lied to him. But worst of all were his secret orders. Henry was strong for ritual. It always amuses mediocre minds to break away from the flour barrels and the woollen samples and the meat markets and smear themselves in mediævalism.

The worst order Henry belonged to was the Apostles of Light, of which he was Supreme Exalted Patriarch. The chief end of the Apostles of Light was to get well lighted up; the one who did this the most thoroughly was the best Apostle. Hence Henry was Patriarch. They held numerous banquets, and Henry never failed to attend. From such affairs he was fetched home by one or two of the less lighted Apostles.

On one such occasion, the Sentry of the Outer Gate and the Keeper of the Sacred Seal had leaned Henry up against his door, rung the bell, and faded away into the night. When Polly opened the door, Henry fell inside as usual, and in time she wheedled him into bed. After this was accomplished, she sat down, clad in her pretty blue bath-robe, and rocked and meditated in the parlor. She felt that something must be done. Things had come to the point where Henry was home only occasionally of an evening. Sundays he slept all day. It was no use to argue with him in the morning; no self-respecting drunkard will admit any doings of the night before. Henry pooh-poohed everything, told her she wildly exaggerated, or merely became indignant. He insisted that he remembered everything he had said and done, and even related intricate conversations that never took place, thus proving that a drunkard's memory is more tenacious and accurate than a teetotaler's. So, of course, Polly decided to consult Aunt Susan.

Aunt Susan was rolling out the doughnuts for which she is so justly famous, when Polly arrived. She dearly loved to give advice, and could sniff its necessity from afar; so she was pleased to see Polly, and offered her the little low rocker by the sink, looking at her meanwhile over the rims of her spectacles in a sort of cheerful expectancy.

"It's about Henry, Aunt Susan," Polly began.

"What about him?" asked Aunt Susan, rolling her dough into a thin strip.

"He won't spend any of his evenings home!" declared Polly, her eyes beginning to fill.

Aunt Susan pensively sprinkled her dough with flour, and took down her circular tin cutter from its nail overhead.

"The road to a man's heart is through his stomach," she said, uttering one of her obvious oracles.

Polly faintly murmured that she did not quite understand.

Aunt Susan began to cut her dough into circular disks.

"You come of a family of famous cooks on both sides of the house," she finally said. "Your grandmother was celebrated all over the county,

and your mother was almost as good. Of course your father's folks were nowhere near up to them, but they were far better than the average. You were brought up to know how to cook. Well, as to Henry, *feed him.*"

"Why, Aunt Susan! I *do* feed him!" exclaimed Polly, in an injured tone.

"Yes, but you don't feed him right," insisted Aunt Susan, removing, one after another, the centres from her little disks, using for the purpose an old thimble. "If you did, he *would* stay home evenings—at least, some of the time."

"But what is the use? He does n't come home now more than once or twice a week, and he would n't if I cooked three times as much!"

"Polly," said Aunt Susan, beginning to roll up the scraps left over after her cutting, and moulding them together, "Henry is a good provider, is n't he? You can buy the best the market affords, can't you?"

"Yes," Polly admitted. There was nothing she could not have; Henry never questioned the provision bills.

"And Henry is hearty, is n't he?"

Polly admitted that to call Henry merely hearty was to damn him with faint praise. Aunt Susan gathered from her niece that, compared to Henry at his best, a man-eating shark was like a vegetarian on a fast.

"Well, then," cried Aunt Susan triumphantly, "it is as simple as scat! Never mind whether he comes home or not; you get up a real hearty dinner for him every night; not too many kinds, and none of this Christian Science, Domestic Science, predigested stuff; but real, hearty, old-fashioned cookery. If he does n't come home, eat what you can yourself, and send the rest over to the neighbors. There's plenty in Waurego needs it. *Some* night he will happen to come home; and he must find such a dinner waiting for him that he will think about it all next day, and long for dinner-time to come round again. That'll fetch him, or any other man!"

Of course Polly took the advice. As I said, people always take Aunt Susan's advice. And understand me, I'm not kicking!

For three nights Polly got up a rousing dinner only to have Henry return (or be returned) hours after it was cold and the things washed up and put away. On the fourth night, needing a change of collar and shoes, he came home for a hurried bite, expecting to attend a banquet of the Apostles of Light at eight in the lodge rooms. He found waiting for him a baked sugar-cured ham, garnished with bay-leaves and cloves, and with a ravishing sauce made of brown sugar, vinegar, and spices; some grilled sweet potatoes in honey, hot coffee and rolls, and the first native asparagus of the season.

Henry looked surprised, but said nothing. He ate until his eyes bulged, and when Polly softly urged him to have another slice of the

streaky, crisp fat, and to let her pour out his coffee and refill his cup with some that was hot, he was too weak to resist. After dinner he concluded that he would rest in the parlor a few minutes until it was time to dress, and took his evening paper there to read. Soon after Polly heard him snoring, and when she shook him by the shoulder it was after ten o'clock and too late to go to the banquet.

"Why, Henry, I supposed you had gone long ago!" she lied glibly.

Henry looked considerably surprised, but said nothing. It was the first time he had ever missed a banquet of the Apostles of Light.

The next night Polly had an equally attractive dinner, but Henry stayed out till after three, trying to justify the statement of the man who said he could play poker.

The following night, as sometimes happened after such a late session, he came home early and declared that he was going to get a good night's sleep, as business was very wearing these days. He found an enormous and juicy porterhouse smothered in onions, a spring salad, more hot coffee, corn muffins, two or three kinds of jam, and mustard pickle.

Having eaten himself into a stupor, he remarked, "Well, you are sure some cook, Polly!" and promptly went to bed.

The following night he was out again, where, Polly did not know; and a stuffed chicken was wasted, as Polly was too tired to eat. The next night, however, he was on hand in good season, and evidently he had given considerable thought to his dinner, for he asked first thing what they were going to have that night. It proved to be a brace of delicious guinea chicks, stewed mushrooms, sliced cucumbers, currant jell, and a great loaf of chocolate cream-cake, with tea.

Henry ate all his chick, and half of Polly's, most of the mushrooms, and three pieces of cake. By the way he licked his chops, Polly was in a panic lest he might not have had enough; but he seemed satisfied. This night he went out after dinner.

On the day after, he telephoned at noon, asking if he might bring over a couple of friends to dinner. He had always been in the habit of entertaining them at McGuire's. Polly delightedly acquiesced, and got up a turkey dinner, with all the proper fixings, and a great crock of cider, Lyonnaise potatoes, succotash, two kinds of pie, and an assortment of pickles and preserves. The three men left nothing but bones and soiled plates. All were noisy in their praise of the dinner. Also, although the invited guests tucked their napkins under their chins and were more or less adept sword-swallowers, they were good-hearted chaps, and each during the coming week invited Polly and her husband out to the theatre; so she spent two successive evenings in his company, which was nearly a record.

The ensuing week he invited four more friends to his home for dinner, and to play poker later. Polly gave them a roast sucking pig, a kidney

pie, seven kinds of vegetables, and three kinds of pastry, with all the hot coffee they could swallow. Afterward they played poker in Henry's den; but it is impossible to look upon a man's house exactly as one does upon a club-room or a livery-stable, and as a result the party was rather quieter, and broke up earlier, than usual; and all agreed next day that they felt better than they ever had before on a "morning after."

Thus it became the custom of Henry to hold one regular poker session at home each week; and as this was always on a Wednesday night, Polly at last had something definite to go on. Before retiring, she slipped into the den, smiled at the shirt-sleeved devotees at the shrine of chance, set down a fresh pitcher of ice water and a hearty cold luncheon, and departed noiselessly. In time the weekly meeting was stretched to a bi-weekly one; and Henry was now definitely established at home every Wednesday and Saturday night.

The real triumph of Polly's system (or Aunt Susan's) came when Henry announced one night that he had resigned as Patriarch of the Apostles of Light, and was going to cut out future banquets, because these feeds were getting to be positively fierce.

In fact, Polly set a standard that ruined all other eating-places for Henry. He still wandered from the fold, but only for social purposes; he never willingly dined away from home; and two-thirds of the time he was too stuffed and groggy afterward to work up enough gumption to dress and go out. He fell into the habit of dozing over his paper in the chair, and waking up too late to start for any party. Incidentally, his waist-line expanded to such an extent that he had to have all his clothes let out, and he acquired a dignified waddle in strong contrast to his former brisk walk. People remarked that Henry Blake was beginning to show his years.

Night after night Polly taxed her ingenuity to devise for her husband new dishes which should be at once hearty and palatable; and day after day Henry stepped gingerly on the scales, and noted that he was creeping well past the two hundred mark.

Finally he was called upon to take a three weeks' trip through the Middle West, and returned more or less shot to pieces and with a badly upset stomach. For the first time in his life he was irritable, and descanted bitterly on the fact that American hotels and restaurants were the worst in the world.

For a long while he stayed at home nights, because he was too ill to go out. Gradually he recovered his usual health and tone, and began to enjoy home cooking once more; and with increasing health he resumed to some extent his nocturnal habits. Still, he spent at least half of his evenings home, and Polly and he received numerous invitations from grateful participants of her groaning table.

It is right at this point that I am distressed by the shortcomings of

real life, as viewed from the standpoint of art. Were I composing a neat short-story, I feel that I could manage a clever climax, an artistic dénouement. But, alas, life cares nothing for art. Just as you get a story going nicely, along comes Clotho—or is it Lachesis?—no, Atropos—and with a sharp pair of scissors she cuts the affair off—snip! Just like that. It leaves a most unfinished appearance.

I cannot seem to do better than to quote Polly. We were talking about poor old Henry one night (Polly and I have been married 'most two years now, and tell each other everything; at least, she tells me everything), and she said, "I am *sure* I could have domesticated Henry in time! Everything was going splendidly, thanks to Aunt Susan's advice, and he was staying home more and more, when he came down with that attack of gastritis, followed by apoplexy. Yes, if Henry had lived six months longer, I almost *know* that I could have reformed him!"

She added (and somehow this sent a sort of chill down my spine), "You are going to be home to-night for dinner, are n't you, dearie? I'm going to have spring lamb and mint sauce, and some of the Town Meeting cake Aunt Susan showed me how to make!"



"THE SECRET OF SUZANNE"

By Sigmund Spaeth

MR. WOLF-FERRARI, the composite German-Italian musician, played a neat trick on the operatic world when he wrote his one-act farce-comedy, "The Secret of Suzanne." The piece is nothing more nor less than a burlesque of the modern style of opera, yet it is included in the Metropolitan repertoire with the very works which it ridicules. The melodiousness of a large part of the score merely intensifies the humor of the elaborately orchestrated take-offs which are introduced at every opportunity. The agonies of the jealous husband, for example, are really a bit of light persiflage aimed at such composers as Puccini and Leoncavallo. The realistic musical description of the curling smoke from a cigarette is distinctly a joke on Debussy, and when the husband burns his hand on that same cigarette the accompanying discord is worthy of Wagner at his worst.

As a bit of operatic parody, "The Secret of Suzanne" is delicious. Considered as music or drama, however, it is of the same class as the crockery-smashing horse-play of the vaudeville stage.

SHORT-STORY MASTERPIECES

SECOND SERIES—RUSSIAN

VIII. THE OLD BELL-RINGER

By Vladímir Korolénko

DONE INTO ENGLISH BY JOHN COUNOS, AND WITH
INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

KOROLÉNKO THE EXILE

NO intelligent outlander, I suppose, but marvels at the patience with which the Russian people endure the exile system which has so long brewed hell-broth for the nation to drink. When some violent offense is answered by such punishment, we do not demur, but when trivialities are magnified, and the police stupidly blunder, our blood boils with protest.

So many times has Vladímir Korolénko been banished, that exile must seem to him almost a normal condition, and freedom from police surveillance a happy freak of fortune. And yet, more than any other distinguished Russian writer, he is free from pessimism—his writings are filled with passages of lyric sweetness.

Sixty years ago—in July, 1853—Vladímir was born at Jitómir, in the government of Volynia. His father, of Cossack blood, was a district judge in the cities of Dúbno and Róvno, having previously served as district attorney, and also as a minor judge. He was an honest man, since he forbore to enrich himself with bribes, but made his modest salary suffice. This course—eccentric in those days—left his wife in straitened circumstances when he died. Vladímir was about fifteen at the time, and still in the Gymnasium at Róvno, but his mother, the daughter of a Polish landed proprietor, was enabled to keep him in school and also maintain her other children, three boys and two girls.

The future author entered the Institute of Technology at St. Petersburg in due course, and for two years fought off the extremes of nakedness and hunger by coloring maps in the intervals of study, for he had come to the great capital with only seventeen rubles in his purse. The third year found him in Moscow, in the Petróvsk (St. Peter's) Agricultural Academy, and here, in the third year of his new course (1875), he got his first taste of exile. His unforgivable crime was to par-

ticipate in a joint address of the students to the Faculty! For this he was banished to the government of Vólogda, but the sentence was not completely carried out, for some one relented and before he reached the place he was bidden to return to his home at Krónstadt. Here for one year he was kept under police surveillance.

At the end of the year he was allowed to remove with his family to St. Petersburg, where he worked in peace as a proof-reader, until February, 1879. But he was soon to learn that Government never forgets, for twice during that month was his home officially searched, and at length he, together with his brother, his brother-in-law, and his cousin, was banished to Glázof, in the government of Vyátka, and presently still further north, to Vyshne Volótsk, where he was confined in a political prison—and all without a trial, the reading of charges, or any semblance of human justice.

The whole term of his exile was spent without a single gleam of light to make clear his offense. But *after* his release in 1880, he learned that his exile was due to his having attempted to break prison—an offense which was alleged against him before he had ever been in prison!

The circumstances of his release were fortunate. Prince Iméritínsky had been deputed to investigate the condition of the political prisons and to report on the causes of incarceration. Among other prisons, he visited that at Vyshne Volótsk, and Korolénko was already on the way to Yakútsk, Siberia, when the message came ordering his release—probably as a result of the investigation.

Even then entire freedom was not granted him, for he was “allowed” to settle at Perm; and here he began his active work as a writer, though he had written successfully as early as 1879.

In 1881 Alexander III became Emperor of Russia, and all his subjects were required to take oath of allegiance. But Korolénko refused, because in addition the government officers demanded that he betray his friends by giving details of any revolutionary enterprises in which he knew them to be engaged. Rather than become a party to such villainy, the young man chose further exile, and for the succeeding three years lived miserably in Yakútsk, in East Siberia. At length he returned to the ancient Tartar city of Nizhni Novgorod, on the Volga, where he now lives with his family.

All this period of maddening oppression was aggravated by the fact that his mother needed his help. When in 1879 Korolénko began to contribute literary sketches to such Russian periodicals as *Russian Thought*, *The Northern Messenger*, and *Annals of the Fatherland*, the meagre honorariums were indeed a blessing to his loved ones.

The thing that “goes without saying” often needs to be said just the same. That a writer is likely to reproduce his life-experiences in his

writings is one of these truisms, yet it will always remain an interesting occupation to trace connection between life and literary product in the work of an author of individuality.

Korolénko came from "Little Russia," and began to find his subjects in the towns and villages of the west country in which he was born, but naturally he turned at length to depicting the life of the extreme Siberian east.

That Korolénko has been formed in opinion and moulded to iron fortitude of heart by his severe experiences in exile is shown by his remarkable story, "The Wondrous Maid," in which the Nihilist is depicted as a simple gendarme, whose manhood transfigures his Nihilism and his work as an officer. Again, our author proved his independence in a letter to the St. Petersburg Academy, in which, as did Chekhov before him, he courteously declined membership because the Academy had struck the name of Gorky from its list of members.

It was in 1885, while in exile in Yakútsk, that he wrote his famous "Makár's Dream." It is an odd fantasy, this story of the Yakut who, having gotten half frozen in the wood, dreams that he is dragged before the tribunal of the great Lord Toyon—a nondescript judge who is neither of heaven nor of earth. Before a great scale, whose one end is a small golden platter and whose other a huge wooden bowl, the peasant is summoned to explain the acts of his life. At length, when his cheatings and stealings are found to have outweighed all of the deeds of service and faithfulness in his life, he suddenly breaks into an unwonted eloquence of protest. He is unwilling to bear the penalty of being turned into a beast of burden by becoming the horse of a church official, not because the horse is badly treated, for it is well fed—better fed, indeed, than he, the peasant, has ever been—but he protests because the penalty is unjust. This appeal to justice seems to move the great Toyon, and he ends by saying to the dejected Makár: "Have patience, poor soul, thou art no longer on earth: here will be found justice, even for thee!" And as he speaks the scales begin to tremble, and the wooden bowl, filled with his evil deeds, rises higher and higher, as though weighed down by his good acts.

Surely, the great meed of injustice suffered by The Exile himself gave inspiration for the message of mercy at the end of this fantastic tale.

What may be called Korolénko's Siberian era is further illustrated in his sketches of a Siberian tourist, nine of which cover about one hundred pages of ordinary size. All the sketches are remarkable for local color and fine understanding of character. The one unfortunate tendency is toward unfinished situation, for the sense of coming to an adequate close is inseparable from good story-telling. It is but fair to observe, however, that this trait of incompleteness is characteristic of the sketch as a fictional form.

Throughout this series I have frequently asserted the obvious fact that Russian themes have largely reflected the Russian temperament, as is shown by the realistically direct and often terrible pictures which fill the pages of their literature. Altogether apart from our interest in the literate expressions of a great and alien people, we must feel a sort of gruesome fascination as we are thrilled to the point of horror in reading these simple yet titanic records of gloom.

All this raises the question of what is the difference between fascination and charm—for charm, from the Anglo-American viewpoint, is almost an unknown element in Russian literature. Fascination they all possess; but charm is fascination plus charm. In Korolénko we do have a writer of charm; and, besides, a charm that is not the reflex of literatures other than his own—it evidently springs from the sweetness of a spirit which all of the bitterness of banishment could not defile. Here is a high and final test of native fineness.

As compared with the stories of Garshin, with their "terrible, incoherent cries of woe," Korolénko's tales are idyllic. A rhythmical, lyrical measure beats enchantingly in his nature passages, whose intimacy with the life of the woods inevitably recalls the French Theuriet. "The Forest Whispers," one of his longer short-stories, is simply redolent of tree-fragrance. We feel the wandering airs of the glades; we hear the never-ceasing swish of majestic boughs; we stand rapt in the cathedral silences of the green-shadowy aisles. The peasant tale is the thread on which these pearls are strung, but the pearls hide the string.

Listen to this passage; what Loti has evoked from the inscrutable sea Korolénko has charmed from the forest with his enchanter's wand.

In the forest there was always a murmur, regular, continuous, like the faint echo of a distant peal of bells; soft and indistinct, like a song without words, or like the confused recollection of bygone days. The murmur never ceased by day or night, for it was an old dense forest of pines that had never been touched by woodman's saw or axe. Lofty pines, a hundred years old, with their red, sturdy trunks, stood in close array, waving, in response to each breath of wind, their high-tufted tops. Below, all was quiet; the air was filled with an odor of tar; through the thick layer of pine-cones, with which the ground was strewn, pushed gay ferns, in all the luxury of their rich fringes, and standing motionless, their leaves unstirred by the breeze. In damp nooks green grasses rose up on their high stalks; and the white clover bent its heavy head, overcome, as it were, with dreamy lassitude. And above flowed the murmur of the forest, the mingling sighs of the old pine-wood.

Besides "The Forest Whispers," two stories belong especially to Korolénko's Little-Russian group—"Iom-Kipour" (the Jewish Day of Expiation) and "The Blind Musician." The former relates how a

Little-Russian miller, good Christian though he is, narrowly escapes being carried away by the Devil, in the place of the Jewish tavern-keeper Iankiel, because, like him, he has tried to make money out of the poor peasants—the same tendency to penetrate to the inner life which we discover in other of Korolénko's work, for he rose above the realistic school, with its pathological records.

"The Blind Musician" is a remarkable psychological story—about forty thousand words in length—in which all the sensations of the blind are portrayed with sympathy and intelligence. The author has not attempted to build up a meretricious interest by surrounding his blind characters with the usual accompaniments to be found in fiction—poverty and physical distress. Disallowing all such devices, he wonderfully pictures the life of a child born blind in the home of a wealthy family, his advance to boyhood, his love-life, and finally his manhood's experiences as a brilliant musician, "who attempts to reproduce the sensations of sight by means of sounds."

The following passage is typical:

The boy imaged to himself depth in the form of the soft murmur of the stream as it flowed at the foot of the precipice, or of the frightened splash of pebbles thrown from its top. Distance sounded in his ears like the confused notes of a dying song. At times, in the sultry noonday, when over the whole of nature there reigns a quiet so profound that we can only divine the uninterrupted noiseless course of life, the face of the blind boy would light up with a strange expression. It seemed as if, under the influence of the silence that prevailed around, there rose from the depth of his soul sounds audible only to himself, to which he was listening with rapt attention. It was easy to believe that at such moments a vague but productive train of thought was awakening in his soul, like to the imperfectly caught melody of an unknown song.

Two prose poems, of harmonious diction and fine human feeling, I have space only to mention—"Easter Night," and "The Old Bell-Ringer," which Korolénko calls "A Spring Idyl." The latter is reproduced herewith in a new translation for this series, and from it the tone of the former may well be inferred.

Though not a great novelist—if he can be classed as a novelist at all—Korolénko is the exponent of normality. He is more like Turgenev than is any other living writer, though comparison with the Greatest must be taken to imply equality. The anarchistic, anti-Christian Artsybashev, whose big-fisted novel, "Sanin," forms an iconoclastic type of its own, cannot approach Korolénko in lucid attractiveness. Tolstoi, Korolénko followed, but at a distance, for he was of the romantic school

and little inclined to Tolstoi's ultra-idealism, particularly that of the last period.

One more refreshing characteristic of our author I venture to name—human sympathy. True, he does not always temper his pity for the "unfortunates" with the sound judgment of the moralist. Whether they suffer deservedly or not he does not deeply inquire—it is enough for him that they suffer.

Well, I love him for that very trait of all-embracing sympathy. When a man lets his heart go unleashed by the eternal judgment as to whether the victim has sinned and may be suffering a righteous punishment, he rises to utmost humanity—which is to say, the divine spirit of the Great Master whose heart was Pity.

THE OLD BELL-RINGER

IT had grown dark.

The tiny village, resting on the edge of a remote stream, in a pine forest, had become enveloped in that twilight which is peculiar to starry spring nights, when the thin mist, rising from the earth, deepens the shadows of the woods and fills the open spaces with a silvery blue vapor. . . . How still was everything, and pensive and sad!

The village was quietly dreaming.

The dark outlines of the wretched huts were but vaguely visible; here and there lights were aglimmer; now and then you could hear a gate creak; a dog's bark would start suddenly and die away; occasionally out of the dark woods the figure of a pedestrian would emerge, or that of a horseman; or a cart would pass by with a jolting noise. These were the inhabitants of lone forest settlements, gathering to their church to greet the great spring holiday.

The church stood on a little hill, in the very middle of the village. Its windows were all alight. Its belfry—an old, tall, and dark structure—pierced the blue sky.

The steps of the staircase creaked as the old bell-ringer ascended the belfry, and soon his little lantern looked like a star suddenly sprung into space.

It was hard for the old man to mount the steep staircase. His old legs had already served their time, and his eyesight had grown dim. . . . It was time an old man had rest, but God seemed slow in sending deliverance. The old bell-ringer had buried sons and grandsons; he had escorted both young and old to their final resting-place; but he himself was still alive. It was hard! . . . So many times had he greeted Easter that he had lost count—he could not even remember how

many times he had awaited here his last hour. And now once more God had willed that he should be here.

Having reached the top, he leaned his elbow on the railing.

Below, around the church, he could discern the wretchedly kept graves of the village burial-place; as if to protect, old crosses stood over them with outstretched arms. Here and there a young birch-tree inclined over them its branches, as yet leafless. . . . The aromatic odor of young buds ascended from below towards Mikheyich, and with it came a feeling of the sad tranquillity of eternal sleep.

And what would he be doing a year hence? Would he once more climb this height, under this bronze bell, to arouse with a resounding peal the lightly-slumbering night, or would he be resting . . . down there, in some dark corner of the graveyard, under a cross? God knows! . . . He was ready, but in the meantime the Lord called him once more to greet the holiday.

"All glory be to God!" whispered his lips, accustomed to the old formula. Mikheyich raised his eyes towards the sky, dense with millions of stars, and crossed himself.

"Mikheyich, Mikheyich!" a trembling voice, also that of an old man, suddenly called him from below. The aged sexton looked up towards the belfry, even fixed his palm over his blinking, tear-wet eyes, and still could not see Mikheyich.

"What do you want? I am here," answered the bell-ringer, leaning out from the belfry. "Can't you see me?"

"No, I can't see. Isn't it time to strike? What do you think?"

Both of them glanced at the stars. Thousands of God's lights twinkled on high. The fiery "Wagoner" was already far above the horizon. Mikheyich pondered.

"No, not yet; wait just a little longer. . . . I know when to . . ."

He knew. He had no need of a timepiece. God's stars always told him when the time came. The earth and the sky, the white cloud floating silently across the expanse of blue, the indistinct murmur of dark pines below, and the rippling of the stream concealed by the dark—all were familiar to him, near to him. . . . Not in vain had he spent his life here.

For the moment his entire long past unrolled before him. . . . He recalled how he ascended the belfry with his father for the first time. . . . Good Lord! how long ago it was!—and what a short time it seemed! . . . He saw himself once more a fair-haired lad; his eyes were kindled; the wind—not the sort that raises the dust of the street, but rather a more rare wind, flapping, as it were, its noiseless wings high above the earth—played with his hair. . . . There below, so far, so far away, he saw some sort of little people; and the houses of the

village also seemed small, and the forest receded into the distance, and the round-shaped meadow, upon which stood the village, seemed immense, almost boundless.

"Well, here it is, all here!" smiled the old man, glancing at the small spot of earth.

"So life, too, is like that," he reflected. "When one is young, one sees neither its end nor its edge." . . . And yet here it was, as if in the palm of one's hand, from the very beginning to the very grave he had just been contemplating in the corner of the burial-ground. . . . What of that? Glory be to the Lord!—It was time for rest. It was a hard road, and he had traversed it an honest man; and the damp earth was his mother. . . . Soon—if only soon! . . .

Well, the time had come. Mikheyich glanced once more at the stars, removed his cap, crossed himself, and began to gather up the ropes of the bells. . . . A few more moments, and the nocturnal air trembled from the resounding stroke. . . . Another, a third, a fourth . . . one after the other, filling the lightly-slumbering pre-festal night with an outpouring of powerful, lingering, resonant, singing tones.

The bell grew silent. The service in church had begun. It was the habit of Mikheyich in former years to go down and to stop in a corner near the door in order to pray and listen to the chanting. This time, however, he remained in the tower. It was difficult for him; aside from that, he felt intensely fatigued. He sat down on a little bench, and as he listened to the dying tones of the agitated bronze he grew deeply pensive. What were his thoughts? He himself could hardly have answered the question. . . . The bell-tower was but dimly lighted by his lantern. The still vibrating bells were lost in the darkness; faint murmurs of the chant reached him occasionally from below, and the nocturnal wind stirred the ropes fastened to the iron hearts of the bells.

The old fellow let fall his gray head upon his breast. His mind was in a state of delirious fancy. "Now they are singing a hymn," he thought, and he imagined himself among the others in church. He heard an outpouring of children's voices in a choir; he saw the figure of the long-since-departed priest Nahum exhorting the congregation to prayer; he saw hundreds of peasants' heads, like ripe corn before the wind, bend low and stand erect again. . . . The peasants were crossing themselves. . . . Familiar faces, all of them, and all faces of the dead. Here was the stern face of his father; here, beside his father, his older brother, crossing himself and sighing. And he himself stood here, in the bloom of health and strength and full of the unconscious yearning for happiness and the joy of life. . . . Where, oh, where, was this happiness? . . . The old man's mind flared up for a moment, like a

dying flame, flashing with a bright, quick movement and illuminating for the moment all the passages of his past life. . . . Hard work, sorrow, care. . . . Oh, where was this happiness? A hard fate can bring furrows to a young face, give a stoop to a strong back, and cause one to sigh like an older man.

There, on the left, among the women of the village, humbly inclining her head, stood his sweetheart. A good woman, hers be the Kingdom of God! How much had she not suffered, that fine soul! . . . Constant need and labor and the inevitable womanly sorrow will cause a handsome woman to wither; her eyes will lose their sparkle; and the expression of perpetual, dull-like fright before each unawaited blow of life will change the most superbly beautiful creature. . . . Yes, and where was her happiness? . . . One son remained to them, their one hope and joy, and he fell a victim to human weakness.

And he too was here, his rich enemy, bending low time and again, seeking to pray away the bitter tears of orphans he had wronged; repeatedly he was performing upon himself the sign of the cross, falling on his knees and touching the ground with his forehead. . . . And Mikheyich's heart boiled over within him, while the dark faces of the ikons looked down severely from their walls upon human sorrow and human iniquity.

All that was past, all that behind him. . . . Now the entire world seemed to him like a dark bell-tower, where the wind blew in the dusk, stirring the bell ropes. . . . "Let the Lord judge you!" whispered the old man, shaking his gray head, while tears silently ran down his cheeks.

"Mikheyich! Mikheyich! . . . You have n't fallen asleep?" some one shouted up to him from below.

"Eh?" returned the old man, and quickly jumped to his feet. "Lord! Have I in truth fallen asleep? That never happened before!"

With an accustomed hand, Mikheyich quickly caught the ropes. Below him moved the peasant throng, a veritable ant-hill; the holy banners aglimmer with gold brocade fluttered in the wind. . . . The procession made a circuit of the church, and presently Mikheyich heard the joyous cry, "Christ has risen from the dead!"

Coming like a mighty wave, the cry welmed the old man's heart. . . . And it seemed to Mikheyich that brighter flared the lights of the waxen candles, and that stronger grew the agitation of the people; the holy banners seemed to become more alive; and the suddenly awakened wind caught up the waves of sound and with broad sweeps lifted them high, where they became one with the loud triumphant music of the bell.

Never before had old Mikheyich rung so well!

It was as if the old man's brimming-over heart had passed into the

inanimate bronze; and it seemed as if the reverberations at the same time sang and throbbed, laughed and wept, and, uniting in a rare harmony, rose higher and higher unto the starry sky. The stars themselves seemed to him to take on a new sparkle, to burst into flame, while the sounds trembled and flowed, and again came down to earth with a loving embrace.

A powerful bass loudly proclaimed: "Christ has risen!"

While two tenor voices, constantly atremble from the repeated blows of the iron hearts, mingled with the bass joyously and resonantly: "Christ has risen!"

And, again, two most slender soprano voices, seemingly in haste not to be left behind, stole in among the more powerful ones, little children, as it were, and sang in emulation: "Christ has risen!"

The entire belfry seemed to tremble and to shake; and the wind blowing in the face of the bell-ringer appeared to flap its mighty wings and to repeat: "Christ has risen!"

The old heart forgot about life, full of cares and wrongs. The old bell-ringer forgot that life for him had become a thing shut up in a melancholy and crowded tower; he forgot that he was alone in the world—like an old stump, weather-beaten and broken. . . . He intercepted these singing and weeping sounds, fleeting higher towards the skies and falling again to the poor earth, and it seemed to him that he was surrounded by his sons and his grandsons; that these joyous voices, of old and young, had flowed together into one great chorus, and that they sang to him of happiness and joyousness, which he had not tasted in his life. . . . And the old man continued to tug at the ropes, while tears ran down his face, and his heart beat tremulously with the illusion of happiness.

And below the people were listening and saying to each other that never had old Mikheyich rung so marvellously.

Then all of a sudden the large bell trembled violently and grew silent. . . . The smaller ones, as if confused, rang an unfinished tone; and then too stopped, as if to drink in the prolonged, sadly droning note, which trembled and flowed and wept, gradually dying away in the air. . . .

The old bell-ringer fell back exhausted on the bench, and his two last tears trickled silently down his pale face.

"Quick! Send a substitute! The old bell-ringer has rung his last stroke."



ROMANCE

By Carl H. Grabo

THE moonlight prompted it. "Playing the fool is a pleasant pastime," reflected the young man in the boat, "particularly when no one knows the fool."

He laid the guitar on the seat, took up the oars, and rowed slowly to the dark shore-line. The silver water spilled from the blades that left dainty maelstroms of light in the track of the boat. The prow slid softly up the wet sand of the beach. He jumped out, and, seizing his guitar, ran up the grassed terrace. The house in front, dark amid the trees, would serve as well as any. The upper balcony, to which climbed the yellow roses, was the very place for Juliet. He considered his repertoire. "'Meet Me by Moonlight Alone' is appropriate," he reflected.

He thrummed his instrument with indifferent skill, and sang the two verses. "Wonder if I can get the *F* in the serenade," he said aloud. "Juliet does n't seem to be critical, luckily."

"Loveliest maiden of Sevilla,
Show those tiny feet of thine,"

he sang, and ended with a flourish.

A rose fell beside him.

"Ah, Juliet!" he exclaimed. "'On the viewless wings of poesy!' I knew you would come to my singing. In music, you see, it is the soul of the singer, not the mere mechanical execution, that creates the spell."

"You sing very well, Romeo," said Juliet.

He tried to catch a glimpse of her, but could not.

"How did you know I was here?" she asked quizzically.

"The realm of poetry is your abiding place," he answered, "and on a moonlight night one balcony serves as well as another. Dreams, you know, are no respecters of places."

"That is so," said Juliet. "Do you often evoke spirits in this romantic fashion?" she added softly.

"Not as a general thing," he admitted. "I'm a practical person for the most part. Still, one must have his bit of romance at times, and on a moonlight night I try to find compensation for the crude

realities of the waking world. I have to go out by myself to do it. You know, Juliet, that a sympathetic companion is the rarest of luxuries."

"Yes," said Juliet; "I have found it so."

"Now, you, Juliet, are a companionable person. You do the right thing in the right way and at the right time. And one sees you so rarely that you don't cloy, so to speak. You will pardon my frankness."

He seated himself on the garden bench, laid the guitar beside him, and clasped his hands over his knees.

"I have wanted to talk with you for some time," he said when he had disposed himself comfortably. "You are an expert in these matters since our affair in Verona. Why is it that romance cannot endure? You'll admit that it was fortunate, on the whole, that our episode went to smash when it did. I'm afraid I could n't have kept up the glamour. Other ladies on other balconies would have lured me to other serenades."

"So you were inconstant at heart!" said Juliet. "I always feared it. That matter of Rosaline made me suspicious."

"I know I'm a beast, and not worthy of you. That's why I ask," he answered humbly. "Tell me why realization is commonplace, and the unattained or unattainable the theme of poets."

"It was not so with me," returned Juliet. "I was satisfied."

"The male animal is inferior," he admitted. "He is anti-domestic, a sad butterfly. The flowers are so many and all so beautiful, you see, that a single blossom does not suffice."

"I think," said Juliet firmly, "that, given sufficient opportunity, I should have kept you very decently at home, despite your Rosalines."

"No, Juliet, no," he protested. "And make me a fat householder merely, dull and contented! I believe I was described as 'a portly gentleman,' even in youth."

"You would have had your compensations," reassured Juliet. "Really, I should have contrived to satisfy you with captivity."

"Commonplace!" he cried. "Mere commonplace! All of us are poets as children, but after we have been knocked around a bit by the world and married domesticity, we become like every one else. I wonder, though, if there is n't a spark of the old fire hidden in these middle-aged, respectable people who come home to supper on the same car every evening. Don't you suppose they all cherish some unattained romance? Really, life must be a bore without some such consolation."

"They would not change," said she. "They are content. I said that I should have tamed you had I had the time."

"I have always read that women were romantic, but I have ceased to believe it," he replied sadly. "Women are satisfied with attainment, men only with the unattained. That is my profound conclusion. Now, you are doubtless planning to secure a satisfactory place in the world, and when you have it will be content."

"I think I shall marry a broker," replied Juliet. "One with a nice income and prospects. I shall live in some attractive suburb, join a woman's club, and play bridge whist. There are many accessible men who will meet my not exacting requirements. And you—what will you do?"

"That is the riddle," said he dreamily. "I shall knock about the world and carry the same mind under many skies; and I shall never find what I seek. To-morrow I go to the mountains of California, to a ranch, in fact, though the word is prosaic. It is beside the sea, near San Luis Obispo—is n't that a nice name? I took the chance because of it. It sounded romantic. Then, every day I shall look over the blue Pacific and think of the sunny islands with their fronded palms, far beyond the horizon's rim. And some time, when I can't resist, I'll seek them out—and still be discontented, I suppose. Or perhaps I'll be foolish and marry some Spanish girl with dark, mysterious eyes, and think I've found romance. I won't find it, of course, and then I'll become unhappy and commonplace, or, worse, happy and commonplace, like the rest of the world, and raise sheep, and gaze indifferently upon the sea."

"You will always have me to think of," she said, and, though he could not see, she looked down at him and smiled.

"That is so," he said gravely, "and I thank you for it."

He stood up and studied the rose in his hand.

"I shall keep this as a memento, Juliet. We made a great mistake last time. We should only have talked poetry to each other, you unattainable, I always seeking. This time we will make no mistake. Good-by, Juliet."

"Au revoir, let us say, Romeo," she mocked. "You may meet me some time without knowing. I shall know you and never tell. And then I shall have my amusement, too."

"That is a possibility, to be sure," he admitted gaily. "I had n't thought of it. But the world runs not that way, I fear."

He took his guitar and walked leisurely down the slope, without once looking back.

"Well, Juliet, alone on the balcony awaiting Romeo, have you decided to go with us to the seashore? We'll try to make it gayer for you there than here, poor girl."

"I think, Auntie," said Juliet, "I'll have to go back to California. I'm afraid Father wants me."

"We'll miss you terribly," declared the elder woman. "But you are a dutiful girl, and if you think you must, of course——"

Juliet smiled inscrutably upon the moonlit lake.

"You know I should n't go if I did n't feel that I must," she said.



WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND
CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC

THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR

FOR the prospective foreign traveller, an interesting point lies in the fact that the pedestrian in Paris is denied the right of way. This is granted without let or hindrance to anything that goes on wheels, from the electric tram and the automobile down to the push-cart and the omnipresent bicycle, all of which, as if inflated by an excess of liberty, ring their bells or toot their horns, if it so please them, when they are right upon one.

Ordinary streets are difficult enough to cross, with unrestricted traffic going in both directions, and without so much as a protective glance from a policeman placed there for quite another purpose; but the wide, irregular openings at the junction of half a dozen crooked streets prove almost impossible. This market-place crossing is common to all old European towns. In Holland it is a *plein*, in Germany a *platz*, in Italy a *piazza* or a *campo*, and in Paris it is a *place*. London has Piccadilly Circus, and the busiest *place* in Paris is somewhat of a circus, too, when every type of public and private conveyance zigzags across it, hit or miss, oblivious of the rules of the road, while the pedestrian, grown expert at dodging, plays his little game with consummate skill until some fatal moment when—"tag!"—and he is "it."

Now, sad to say, any one being run down in the Paris streets is "run in" for being in the way. If the victim be a Frenchman, although there is no redress for his injuries, he may be released to the accompaniment of a sputtered reprimand; but if an American culprit be brought to

justice on the charge of being run over, hurt, half-killed, his case is carefully considered, and it is highly probable that he will be fined at least twenty francs for being unknown. This last surprising, bitter touch is accounted for by one more French intricacy.

The law in Paris demands that all strangers register before the *Préfecture de Police*, and failure to comply involves a fine and some fury on the part of the officials. The hotels and larger *pensions* usually fill and pass in a blank bearing the name and residence of each individual guest; but many a foreign resident in Paris has never even heard of registering until some grave accident or a slight unpleasantness occurs, when, verily, the way of the transgressor is hard.

An appalling number of street accidents and fatalities has been reported during the present year, and it is encouraging to note a school for *cochers* and chauffeurs. Reading and writing are, however, the principal branches taught. It is, no doubt, recognized that mathematics are intuitional with the Parisian cocher, but horse-sense might well be added to the curriculum.

SELINA YORKE

THE AUTOMOBILE

MANY persons who set no great store by the automobile—possibly because they do not happen to own one—are prone to minimize its many obvious merits, and to dwell dolorously on its minor incidental evils, which may be alliteratively summed up as din, dust, and death.

We beg leave to remind all such persons that this attitude is far from being philosophical. When we remember that automobilists kill a much greater number of themselves than of others, we readily see how an argument based on the charge of inconsiderate slaughter may be called intolerant; at least, it lacks a nice sense of proportion. Again, if the objector be a New Yorker, his objections to dust and din, when produced by a motor-car, must be considered in relation to the equanimity with which he endures—if he does not actually abet, or even cause—din and dust from other sources. In such a case, his attitude is open to the suspicion of discrimination, and may fairly be characterized as irrelevant and impertinent.

But it is in the larger, philosophical view that we would consider the automobile. Its usefulness as a source of inspiration to novelists such as Kipling and to poets such as the late William Ernest Henley is a matter of little moment compared with its significance in the development of a type. This type is no other than the machinist—"mechanician" is a better word: the Coming Man heralded by Mr. H. G. Wells; the god of, not from, the Machine; the master mechanic who in war as

in peace will control the lever, and set in motion the springs of our material progress. Even the intellectual colossus—the Superman Shaw—sees in the mechanician the superior of the mere man of letters. His cockney chauffeur, in “Man and Superman,” tolerant of his employer’s ignorance of machinery, and no less able to set him aright in the matter of a literary quotation, is a symbol of him who is to hold the reins of power.

The automobile is a leveller; from its bowels there shall emerge a triumphant democracy—a democracy already superficially apparent in the similarity of attire of driver and owner, and which will presently go deeper as the ignorant millionaire acquires the trained intelligence and practical, indispensable knowledge of his chauffeur. In the light of Mr. Wells’s prophetic science, we foresee a further lopping of dead languages from the collegiate tree of learning, and the substitution of that living knowledge without which no man may hope to know the soul of the Machine.

But already the American youth is anticipating the time to come; the anatomy of the automobile yields to his inquiring hand the secrets which American boys now grown older once wrested from the gun and the watch. Until it invaded our highways and our homes, no piece of machinery had held forth such invitations to the study and experiment of all. The day is at hand when civilized mankind will be resolved into two races—those who know all about automobiles, and those who do not. Against its coming we venture to submit a paraphrase of a famous epitaph (written for himself by Piron, a French author who failed to be elected Academician), which we hold to be suitable for the tombstone of one of the inferior race run over and killed by an automobile:

*Ci-git Jenkins, qui ne fut rien—
Pas-même un mécanicien.*

W. T. LARNED

HATS OFF OR HATS ON?

STRANGELY variable and contradictory are the customs that govern the hat while it is on duty! In comparing the French with the Germans, would not one say that the former have more of that surface politeness which goes to make good manners? In the reading-room of the National Library at Paris men wear their hats freely if they choose. In the Royal Library at Berlin (Josiah Flynt tells us) a cripple was once sharply rebuked by an official for coming to the desk with his hat on, though the heavy load of books he was bringing made it almost impossible for him to carry it in his hand.

The visitor to New York's public library meets natives who tiptoe along the outer corridors with bared heads, wearing an awed, impressed, oppressed air rather amusing to the citizen of a city that has always had a real public library. Probably after awhile familiarity will cause New Yorkers to feel less ill at ease within the portals of the Bryant Park reservoir of literature and learning.

We occasionally see in a public library some such notice as: "Gentlemen will please remove their hats on entering this room," leaving us to infer that the man who keeps his hat on may not necessarily lack gentle breeding, else the wording might be: "Gentlemen will and others *must*, etc." Most students who use public libraries habitually know that when the hands are burdened with books (perhaps also with umbrella, bag, and other impedimenta) it would be convenient to wear the hat on the head; is there one single sound reason why not? To take off one's hat in an art gallery may afford somebody else a better view of the pictures, but to doff one's hat to a collection of books, most of which are invisible, seems not of vital importance.

Men take off their hats in an elevator car if it contains ladies. When it is crowded the hats must be held at arm's length, high in air, or risk being crushed; though nowhere else would they take up less room or be less in the way than on their owners' heads. And if men pay this homage to the gentle sex in the elevator, why not in the steam or trolley car?

The custom of taking off the hat in church prevails widely, but do not the Friends keep theirs on during divine service? And would not a devout Jew consider it highly irreverent not to wear his hat in the synagogue? There comes to us from England a story of a certain vicar who denounced as being in the last degree sacrilegious the conduct of a party of ladies who came to inspect the interior of his church *bare-headed*. O Inconsistency, thou art a jewel, a paste diamond!

Apart from the dictates of convention, would not the wearing of the hat in church seem more in accord with that abasement which prompts the repentant sinner to cast himself upon the ground and try to hide his face? Why not hide it under his hat and save trouble?

As with one extremity, so with the other. Try to enter an eastern mosque or temple with your shoes on, and see how far you will get; try to enter Grace or Trinity Church with your shoes off, and see how far you will get! So, after all, one is tempted to think there is about as much or as little reason in some of our strictest unwritten laws as there is in the mandates of Simon when he says: "Thumbs up! Thumbs down! Wig-wag!"

FRANK M. BICKNELL



THE CORPORATION DEED OF TRUST

By Edward Sherwood Mead, Ph.D.

THE comments on industrial preferred stocks in the April number have suggested the desirability of a brief explanation of the nature and advantages of the mortgage bond, by way of sharp contrast with those inferior forms of investment. Most people who have saved money are, at least casually, familiar with the nature of a mortgage. They understand it to be a lien upon property for the security of a debt. The conditions of the lien are that in case the debt is not paid at maturity, the lender who holds the lien can force a sale of the property by judicial process, having his own debt paid out of the proceeds and returning any balance to the borrower, who is the owner of the property.

While the operation and effect of the real-estate mortgage is familiar to every one, the nature of the lien conferred by the mortgage is not equally well understood. A mortgage is, in effect, a conveyance of property by the owner to the lender. It is, in form and in effect, a deed similar to the ordinary instrument by which property is conveyed from one person to another, but with this condition, that the creditor holds the title to the property, as trustee for the owner, the conditions of the trust being that if the debt to secure which the conveyance is made is not paid at maturity, or if any other covenant in the mortgage is broken by the lender, the trust, which up to that time has been a "passive" trust, becomes active, and the lender, known as the mortgagee, asserts his title to the property and forces its sale. The agreement between the parties binds the borrower, or owner of the property, not only to the payment of interest and principal, but also by certain other covenants of great importance to the security of the debt. For example, the owner must insure the property and make the policies payable to the lender; he must also pay the taxes and produce the tax receipts to the holder of the mortgage, since a failure to pay taxes might result in a sale of the property by the State, which would deprive the lender of his security. The borrower also agrees to keep the property in good repair, and not to sell any portion of it without the consent of the lender, who will, of course, not allow such a sale to be made unless the proceeds are applied either to the liquidation of the debt, or to the purchase of new

property of equal value to that sold. This mortgage or conditional deed conveying the title to real property to the lender is given to secure a debt in the form of a bond. This bond is a simple promise to pay a definite sum of money, with interest, at a certain date in the future, and is signed by the owner of the property.

The form, therefore, known as the real-estate mortgage comprises two contracts: first, a contract to pay money, and, second, a conveyance of real estate to secure the fulfilment of a contract to pay money. When these conveyances, otherwise known as the mortgage, are copied into a book of record, kept in a public office for the inspection of all those who may be interested, it fixes the title of the mortgage-holder as against all the world. The owner of the property, who is left in possession so long as he carries out his agreements with the lender, is free to sell the property, but he must sell it subject to the right of the lender to enforce the provisions of his contract. It is impossible, in any other way than by a tax sale, to separate the interests of the lender from the property to which that interest attaches.

We have these principles carried out in the corporation mortgage bond, the universal form of safe investment. There is, first, a promise to pay \$1,000,000, \$5,000,000, or \$100,000,000, in ten, twenty, or fifty years from date. This promise to pay, executed by the officers of the corporation, is not expressed in the form of a single note, but is divided into 1,000, 10,000, or 100,000 notes, numbered serially from one to the total number, and all identical in form, with the single difference in the numbers. This division of the corporate debt into "pieces" is for purposes of convenience in marketing. It is unusual for one investor to take more than a small portion of a large loan. By dividing a large debt into a number of identical notes, each of small denomination, it is possible for the company to make a wide distribution of its bonds and gather funds from a great number of private investors and institutions.

Just as the corporation bond differs but slightly from the bonds executed in connection with the real-estate mortgage, so the corporation mortgage is practically identical with the more familiar real-estate mortgage. Because the number of creditors of the corporation are numerous, it is impossible to make the conveyance to the lender—there are too many lenders. It is necessary, therefore, that a trustee should be appointed to act for the lenders, and to hold the property in trust for the securing of these various obligations. Sometimes an individual trustee is named for this purpose, but the usual practice is to designate a trust company, which, because of its large capital, and its administrative organization, experienced in the conduct of matters of this kind, makes a more satisfactory trustee than an individual. A corporation mortgage is therefore usually known as a deed of trust, or sometimes called the mortgage deed of trust. The form follows the usual outline

of real-estate mortgages. There is a description of the bond to secure which the mortgage is executed. Then comes the detailed description of the property. This property is next conveyed to the trustee in a form of which the following is a type:

Now, therefore, this indenture witnesseth that, for and in consideration of the premises and of the acceptance of the refunding bonds by the holders thereof, and of the sum of one hundred dollars, lawful money of the United States of America, to it duly paid by the Trustee at or before the ensembling and delivery of these presents, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, and for other good and valuable considerations, Rogers-Brown Iron Company has granted, bargained, sold, aliened, remised, released, conveyed, confirmed, assigned, transferred and set over, and by these presents does grant, bargain, sell, alien, remise, release, convey, confirm, assign, transfer and set over unto the Trustee, its successors in the trust and its and their assigns, forever, all and singular the following described or mentioned property, rights and franchises, which collectively are hereinafter generally called the trust estate, to wit:

Follows a detailed description of the property, the same description that is contained in the original deed.

The nature of the conveyance is, however, not absolute but conditional. This appears in the following clause, respectively called the habendum clause and the Grant and Trust:

To have and to hold all and singular the said property, rights and franchises unto the Trustee, its successors in the trust and its and their assigns, forever;

In trust, nevertheless, for the equal and proportionate benefit and security of all holders and registered owners of refunding bonds and coupons and, . . . for the enforcement of the payment of the principal . . . and interest of all such bonds when payable, according to the tenor, purport and effect of such bonds and coupons, and to secure the performance and observance of and compliance with the covenants and conditions of this indenture, without preference, priority or distinction as to lien or otherwise of one bond over any other bond by reason of priority of the issue, sale or negotiation thereof, . . . and so that the principal, premium, and interest of every such bond shall, subject to the terms hereof, be equally and proportionately secured hereby as if all had been duly issued, secured and negotiated simultaneously with the execution and delivery hereof.

There is no substantial difference between the wording of the real-estate mortgage and the wording of the corporate mortgage; the only point of variance in the corporation mortgage is its greater complexity, and the fact that the conveyance is not to the lender direct, but to the lender's representative.

From this point on, however, the corporate mortgage contains a great

variety of covenants entered into by the company which owns the property, with the trustee who holds the property in trust for the security of the debt, all of which are calculated to maintain the value of the security. In addition, to a repetition of the agreements contained in the bond to pay principal and interest, the company which owns the property agrees with the trustee that it will pay the taxes; that it will pay all claims for labor and materials out of which mechanic's liens might arise, which might precede the claim of the trustee to the property; that the company will maintain the property in good condition and repair, and will continue to operate the property in the conduct of the business to which it is specifically devoted, as, for example, the production of pig iron or the carrying on of the business of transportation; that any property which they may thereafter acquire they will by a supplementary deed convey to the trustee as additional security to that already conveyed; that they will not, without the consent of the trustee, sell any portion of the property, and that this consent will be given only on condition that the proceeds of the sale represent a fair price for the property disposed of, and that these proceeds are invested in new property to take the place of that withdrawn; that the company will keep all property, subject to the danger of fire damage, fully insured, and that, if the trustee desires it, the policies of insurance shall be made payable to the order of the trustee, so that the money will come into his hands, in order that he may superintend its disbursement; that in so far as the company operates any franchises granted by municipalities, the obligations of these franchises will be faithfully observed, in so far as it holds any property under lease it will faithfully carry out the covenants of these leases, and, in general, that the company executing the mortgage and owning the property will carefully observe and protect the physical condition and the value of the business as a going concern, so that the bondholders may have at all times adequate security for their debt.

The mortgage also prescribed the method of enforcing the rights of the bondholders in case of default in premium or interest, or the breach of any other covenant in the mortgage. In such an event, the trustee is sometimes authorized to seize the property and operate it for the benefit of the bondholders, or, failing in this, to proceed in the manner prescribed by law to have the property sold and the proceeds of the sale applied to the liquidation of the debt. This mortgage is, then, recorded in the county seat of every county in which any property covered by the mortgage may be located, from which time, until every covenant in the mortgage has been faithfully discharged, the bonds of the company are protected by a lien upon the property, from which this property can in no way be released.

It has been noted that the lien of the mortgage has been treated as a lien upon property. In the case of a business corporation, security is,

however, far more than the physical property. This physical property has been operated as a business organization, which oftentimes represents the result of many years' careful work on the part of the owners, and which has reached a high degree of efficiency. Connected with the property is also a certain amount of prestige and good-will, a certain established business reputation which brings trade and increases profits. All of these assets—the physical property, the business organization, the good-will—together represent the earning power of the company, its ability to produce a profit, and to these profits, not only because the company has promised to pay, but because that promise to pay is backed up by a conveyance of all the physical property of the company, the bondholder, after the claim of the State for taxes, has a first right to share.

The mortgage bondholder, let it be carefully remarked, is more than a creditor of the company. His rights do not depend merely upon his ability to sue the company, in case of default in principal or interest on its obligations, and collect from it by the ordinary process of law. This right to sue and collect is a valuable one, but the mortgage bondholder can go much further than this. He is also an owner, through his trusteeship in the property of the company; he has an interest in that property, and although that interest is held in trust for him, yet should need arise the powers of the trust can be asserted and the property can be seized and sold for his benefit. It is this feature which so sharply distinguishes the position of the stockholder from that of the mortgage bondholder. The stockholder has merely an interest in the company, the stockholder owns no property. He and his fellow stockholders, it is true, own the company, and the company owns the property, but this is a very different thing from the direct ownership of the property, which is enjoyed by the bondholder. With him the case is radically different. He, through his trustee, actually owns the property. The claim of the stockholder for dividends is contingent not merely upon these dividends being earned, but upon the decision of the directors to distribute the earnings to the owners of the company. With the bondholder's rights, however, the directors can take no liberties. He bears a more direct relation to the trust estate than they do; they are continued in possession only so long as they live up to the covenants of the mortgage. The bondholder is the owner of the property, and he will assert his title through his trustee if they do not faithfully and regularly pay him his interest.

I have, in the foregoing, stated in the simplest possible terms the position of the mortgage bondholder. It is also of great interest to understand how that position has been strengthened in recent years by radical improvements which have been made in the protective provisions of the mortgage, and also to understand how the large measure of protection which is to-day given the creditors of American corporations can be strengthened by further modifications of their mortgage deeds of trust.